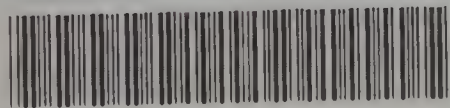
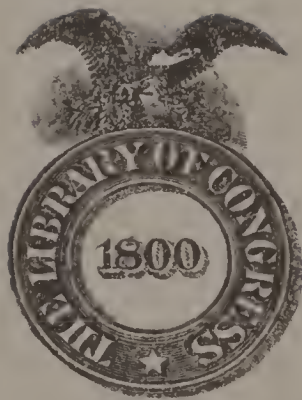


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RED HAND OR THE GRUISER OF THE CHANNEL

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.



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The rescue of Lady Catharine.—page 12

RED HAND

BY

SYLVANUS COBB, Jr.

Author of "THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW," "THE ARMORER
OF TYRE," etc.

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RED HAND.

CHAPTER I.

CASTLE VANE. A YOUNG FISHERMAN.

ON the shore of the Sussex, there is no object that fills with a deeper interest the eye of the tourist, both on account of its picturesque aspect and its historical associations, than Castle Vane. At the present time it is a stately ruin, but majestic in decay. Time, while rending its massive towers, has also bound them together with a strong net-work of vines of ivy and creeping plants, so that they stand like venerable age supported by the entwining arm of charity and filial love.

The prospect from the eminence on which stands this noble ruin is varied and wide-extended. Northwardly, the green vales and pleasant uplands of "Merry England" retire away till softly lost in the dissolving distance. To the east and west are seen turreted towns and ports with anchored shipping and defending fortress. To the south is outspread the shining blue waters of the channel, broad and mirror-like, and bounded in the far southern horizon by the faint azure-gray line of the coast of Normandy. The glimmering sheen of the sun-lit channel is spotted with innumerable specks, some white as snowflakes, others black, as they

present their illumined or shadowy side to the eye. There are vessels of all sizes and characters, steering every one on a different course, some on errands of commerce, others bearing messages of war. Here and there among them goes a dark, mastless craft, trailing a long cloud of opaque smoke after her along the air, and passing ship after ship with a speed that mocks them.

Such is the present aspect of the scenery visible from the cliff on which stands Castle Vane, on any bright morning in summer. But at the period of our tale, its features were somewhat different. No steamers then ploughed the channel, and fewer vessels were seen dotting its expanse; while Castle Vane, instead of being a ruin, lifted its walls and towers and bristling battlements as high and proudly as any lordly castle in the land of England.

Almost overhung by the castle was the small fishing port of Brighthelmstone, a hamlet of threescore huts, where dwelt a rude but honest class of men, who subsisted by fishing in the channel. From the terrace of the castle one could toss a penny into the chimney-tops of two or three of the nearest cottages, though the dwellings were generally some distance apart, following the windings of a street around the curving shore of the cove. There was an air of neatness and thrift about most of the habitations, each having a small garden-patch and a yard in front wherein to dry their nets and fish. If there were any superiority in the appearance of either of these cabins over the other, it was to be claimed by one which stood near the foot of the cliff, and close to the path which wound from the beach to its summit. This superiority consisted in its being whitewashed, and in having vines growing over the narrow doorway in imitation of an arch, beneath which were two wooden benches, from which persons seated upon them had a pleasant view of the channel with its moving craft. That spot, also, wherein the other fishermen dried their nets, was by the proprietor of this abode made a flower-garden, while on the surrounding rocks were spread his nets and sun-dried fish.

One evening in May, in the year 1650, about half an hour before sunset, a fishing-boat came sailing into the cove from the channel, and steered directly for the rude landing in front of the cottage we have described. Its bow was shattered, and it was evidently leaking freely, and kept from sinking only by the extraordinary exertions of a young fisherman, its sole occupant, who was bailing out water constantly as he approached the shore. At length the smack touched the beach, and with an exclamation of satisfaction the young man leaped on shore.

The danger in which the boat had been was apparent to more than one in the village, and encouraging shouts had been sent to the young man's ear, to keep up his strength and not lose his courage. Therefore, on reaching the land in safety, he found himself in the midst of some score of a group, composed of the fishers' wives, of maidens, and of such old men as had given over active service. They looked at the shattered bow of the boat with surprise, and while some congratulated him with having got safely to land, others eagerly inquired how he got so badly wrecked.

"It is of no consequence, friends," answered the young man, as he secured the boat to one of the posts of the pier; "accidents will happen at sea, you know."

This was said with a pleasant laugh; but his mother, who drew near to welcome him after the danger she conceived he had been in from drowning—for he had been seen by her a league at sea, struggling to save his boat, which he had so gallantly brought in—knew that the smile was forced and unnatural to his usually frank and open face.

"There is something in this," she said, shaking her head, and turning to two of her particular gossips, "there is something in this matter more than Guilford sees fit to tell."

The young man, having secured the craft high upon the beach, and furled the sails, shouldered a pair of oars, and with flushed brow and a proud, defiant air, strode up towards the cottage, without regarding his friends, whom he left

examining the boat and wondering how it could have been so shattered unless it had been run into.

“That is it,” asserted an old fisherman, who had carefully examined the broken shearing; “she ha’ been run into, an’ by a heavier craft than hersel’.”

The young fisherman, having deposited his oars in the becket above one of the cottage windows, on the outside of the house, instead of going in, began to pace up and down in the shell-covered walk before it. His eyes were restless and fiery, his attitude erect and warlike, and his heavy steps seemed to fall to the sound of a trumpet. Something evidently had occurred to rouse in the bosom of the young fisherman all the pride, independence, and haughty resentment of the man; for beneath the fustian jacket may beat as much pride and sense of honor as beneath the ermine of a born noble.

The appearance of the young fisherman was superior to that of young men in his class and occupation. This superiority did not consist in dress, for his clothing was as coarse and rude as that of any of his fellows; nor in the symmetry of his person, for there were in the hamlet as well-shaped young men as he; but it was in the noble expression of his whole form and face. He looked like one born rather to command those with whom he daily associated, than to be merely their equal. This innate power in him they recognized, though it was never demanded by him, for he seemed wholly unconscious of a superiority of which all others in the hamlet were instinctively conscious. His face was handsome, and perhaps not less so for being browned by the sea winds till it was almost as dark as the Arabian. His eyes were black, and filled with intelligence and courage. As a seaman he had no equal on the Sussex coast, of his age, all men acknowledged. As a fisherman he was skilled in the craft in all its details, so that no one ever surpassed him in success. If other boats came back empty, Guilford Graham’s was sure to contain some fruits of his skill and patience. In trials of strength and agility in those holiday

sports which the youths of the hamlet used to indulge in, challenging to competition some inland village, he always came off victor. For filial obedience in supporting a widowed mother, for manly protection of his beautiful cousin, Anne Grey, for his fast abiding as a friend, and his reverence for holy things, Guilford was an example to all the young men on the coast. His popular manners, his constant cheerfulness and good nature, made him a general favorite; and many a pretty maiden sighed in her heart for the love of the handsome Guilford.

“What aileth thee, my son?” asked his mother. “Something hath gone across thy temper, and made thee vexed; tell me, what is the matter with thee?”

He stopped in his fierce walk, turned, and taking both her hands in his, he pressed them in affectionate respect, and, looking her in the face, would have spoken, but some strong emotion rising, checked his utterance, and tears filled his eyes and ran down his cheeks. He released her hands, dashed the glittering drops from his face, and would have walked away, when she gently held him.

“Nay, Guilford, you must come and sit down in the porch, and tell me what has happened. Tears in my brave boy’s eyes! Ah, something heavy has pressed upon thy soul this day, to force tears from thee!”

“Come and sit down, mother, and I will tell thee,” he said, after a moment’s internal struggle. “You are wise and discreet, and may be able to advise me. But you will not despise me when you shall know all my rash folly?”

“You must first prove to me that you have been rash or foolish, who were never known to be so,” said his mother, who, though humble in station and poorly attired, seemed to be, as he had said, a wise and discreet woman, being a person of that plain common sense so much oftener found in low conditions of life than in the more artificial circles of society; and to her influence was owed, doubtless, his superiority,—for it is the woman that forms the character of the growing man.

CHAPTER II.

A NARRATIVE OF INTEREST.

THE young man had led his mother to the wooden bench beneath the green arch that spanned the humble doorway, and there, sheltered by the growing foliage, he said to her:—

“Mother, when you have heard what I have to say, give me your wisest counsel. If I were to act, led only by my own impulses, I can see plainly that I should do a greater evil than has been done to me. You remember with what buoyancy I left this morning, to go on my daily fishing cruise?”

“Yes, and spoke of it to Anne before she went to the castle. Methinks I never saw you look handsomer or appear happier.”

“And well might I have looked happy, dear mother; I had just seen and spoken with Lady Catharine!”

“Yes, it always makes one cheerful to see her sunny face, boy.”

“Ah, dear mother, you know not how the sunshine of her face penetrates to and warms my heart. In her presence I feel a joy—a bliss—a happiness—that I experience at no other time. The sound of her voice thrills to my inmost soul. I feel that I could worship her, and adore the very flower crushed by her footstep.”

“You should not speak thus, my boy; it is a sin to worship only God.”

“And the Virgin?”

“That is not so certain, my boy,” she said, gravely but doubtingly; “but if we may worship the blessed Mary, we may not worship earthly maidens.”

"I can see no harm in adoring one so fair and good as the Lady Catharine, dear mother," answered the young fisherman, with enthusiasm.

"You should not think of her, my son, for your words and looks make me fear."

"No evil can come of honoring and delighting in Lady Catharine, dear mother. She always speaks to me so graciously! The day, you remember, when I succeeded in saving the noblemen who were driven on the coast in a French bark, she told me she only wished that she could have had a brother who could have done this; and ever since then, although it is a year ago, she has always seemed to speak to me with a peculiar kindness."

"One of them you saved was her uncle, Sir Harry Vane, and she feels grateful. My son, do not think of the great; their words are air, and their smiles deceit and guile. If you go on thinking so much about every smile and word a noble lady gives you, you will do some foolish thing. Forget the Lady Catharine, boy; and if you must think of fair maidens, which is natural enough for a youth of four-and-twenty, let it be of those of thine own station."

"There are tales of noble maidens being loved and won by lowly youths, mother," answered Guilford, with a certain light of hope and daring speaking in his fine eyes.

"And only in tales are they won—never in reality and truth, my son."

"We will not talk of this now, mother. Hear what I have to say to thee touching what hath happened to-day."

"That is what I would most listen to."

"After I had embarked this morning for the channel grounds to fish, and when I had got out to the rocks over which we cast our lines, I lowered my sails and proceeded to fish as usual. It was a cloudless day, and the fish swam too deep for my hooks; and so I lay back listlessly in my boat, and amused myself, as I love to do when I am rocking alone in my boat out on the bounding sea, with gazing about me. A hundred craft similar to my own were riding

gently upon the undulating waves; and here and there could be seen a tall ship with triple towers of white canvas, crossing from England to France, or from France to England. But those objects soon wearied my eyes, which very shortly rested upon the cliff and lordly towers that soar above our little hamlet. Its castellated angles and battlements were figured in strong, dark lines against the blue sky, and it seemed the proper home of the noble lord who dwells there."

"You speak of our Castle Vane, my son?"

"Yes, mother. As my eye rested upon it, I could not but recall its fairest inmate, for I never behold it that I do not think less of every one it contains than of the Lady Catharine. To my imagination she seemed the only dweller there. Nay, do not frown, mother. As I was gazing on the castellated pile, I recalled, not only the lovely face and form of Lady Catharine, but the time when we first met. Do you remember it, dear mother?"

"Nay, I do not mind such little matters. It was so long ago thou shouldst scarce remind it."

"I shall never forget it. It is a delight for me to recall it, and a joy to talk of it. It was five years ago only. I was then nineteen, and it was my birthday fete; and on that occasion you had presented me with a new jacket, and Cousin Anne had 'broidered for me a gay cap."

"Ah, well do I recollect the jacket and cap, and how gallant you looked in them, my boy."

"After supper I was going to a dance at Tim Dowlin's in honor of his pretty daughter Peggy's marriage, when, as I was crossing the road that leads from the beach round by the mill, in order to reach Tim's before dark, I saw a horse coming towards me at full speed along the old Sussex road. On it was a young girl, who had lost all command of the animal, which, with the reins flying, was evidently running away with her. She did not shriek, nor speak a word, but, as she approached me, she cast on me such looks of appeal for succor, that, regardless of danger, I threw myself with both

hands upon the horse's head, and, dropping to the ground, let him drag me several yards before he could be checked. At every leap forward he made, I expected to feel his iron hoofs crushing into my chest; but the beauty and imploring looks of the lovely girl, which seemed to appeal to me as her last and only hope of life, gave me courage and strength; and at length I brought the horse's head and knees to the ground, and held him, with a power of muscle that I have never felt the possession of since, until she got from the saddle unharmed. I then released my hold of the horse, who furiously bounded away like the wind. My next thought was of the young girl I had been instrumental in saving. She sprang towards me, grasped me by both hands in the warmest manner, and with eyes filled with tears, and smiling with gratitude, she said, with emotion:—

“ ‘How can words thank you! How can anything I can express, young stranger, recompense you for the risk of life you have run for me!’ ”

“ ‘I need no thanks, lady,’ I said to her; ‘the consciousness of your safety is all the reward I can ask or wish for.’ ”

“ ‘As I made her this answer, I looked, dear mother, with wonder upon the extraordinary beauty of her face. I had never imagined there was such loveliness on earth. She was about fifteen years of age, but with the charming richness of form of one two or three years older. Her eyes were a soft azure, that rivalled the bending blue of a summer sky on the sea. Her hood was thrown back, and her golden tresses dishevelled by the swiftness with which her horse had sped with her in his mad flight, and I was completely bewildered with the glory of her beauty.’ ”

“ ‘Will you tell me,’ she said, in tones that have never ceased to echo muscally in my soul, ‘to whom I am indebted for saving me from a painful accident, or perhaps a dreadful death?’ ”

“ ‘It is no matter, lady; my name is nothing; it is humble, and, if spoken, will be forgotten by one so noble as thou art.’ ”

“ ‘Dost thou know me, then?’ she asked, with a smile of surprise. ‘I have not been here before since I was a very little child.’

“ ‘I do not know thy name, lady, but I see that thou art of the high born of the land. I would, for thy sake, that he who has served thee to-day had been thy equal. Shall I remain near thee, as it is growing late, till thy party comes up?’ I asked of her, gloomily too, I fear; for I then, for the first time, my mother, felt what it was to be born of low degree. To gaze upon one so fair and good, and so made to be loved, and feel that I could never be more to her than a common hind—this—this made my cheek kindle and my very heart sink.”

“ ‘Guilford, thou art too ambitious; be content to be what thou art, or thou wilt be a miserable man. Thou canst not change thy nature. Nobles are born nobles—fishermen are born fishermen. Do thy duty in what thou art.’”

“ ‘It is well to talk, mother, but that does not make one’s wretchedness and consciousness of debasement the less.’”

“ ‘Go on with thy story, for I never heard all this before.’”

“ ‘No, nor other ear, save that of Cousin Anne; and she listened to it with but little interest to what thou dost, mother.’”

“ ‘Who was this maiden? Am I right in guessing her to be the Lady Catharine, on the day she came up to the castle from London, where she had lived since she was a child?’”

“ ‘Yes, mother. When I at length told her my name, she answered that hers was Kate Vane.’”

“ ‘Lady Kate, you mean?’”

“ ‘No,’ she said, ‘plain Kate Vane;’ and this, with the pretty way she spoke it, made me like her. I saw she was not proud, although I told her I was a fisherman; for when she asked me to show her the way to the castle, and we walked on together, she asked me a great many questions about the sea, and the fishes, and the way I caught them; and said, of all things she should like to go out some day in my boat, fishing with me. After half an hour’s walk—the

pleasantest half hour of my life—we reached the castle gate. The day had already closed, and the moon was shining brightly. The castle was in a scene of confusion and distress; and just as we entered, several persons with torches, on foot and on horseback, were coming forth, talking so loudly that we understood from their words that the horse which Lady Kate had ridden had reached the castle, and that it was supposed she had been thrown and killed. But when she was seen and recognized, who shall describe the joy! I was quite overlooked in the first outburst of the surprise and delight of all, and instantly withdrew. As I descended the path, I heard my name called by some one from the gate who had been sent for me, doubtless after Lady Kate had time to tell them to whom she had been indebted for her escape; but, as I had no wish to be thanked by any other than Lady Catharine, I quickened my pace, and soon reached the road on the beach. Instead of going home, I continued my original route to Tim's; and as I passed the spot where I had stopped the horse, I paused to recall the scene, her face and voice. As I did so, my eyes were attracted by something which sparkled in the moonlight. I picked it up from the ground, and with pleasure discovered that it was a broken ring. It had evidently been broken by her strong grasp upon the bridle, and dropped in two pieces from her finger when she alighted. It was a diamond set in a circle of pearls. I pressed it to my lips and "—

"Daring boy!" said the mother, half pleased at his gallantry, yet half disapproving, knowing as she did the dangerous tendency of such emotions when once awakened in the bosom of a lowly-born youth towards a high-born maiden. She sighed while she smiled; but the smile passed, leaving a troubled air upon her calm and sensible face. "You returned the ring, of course, Guilford?"

"When next I saw her; but she bade me keep it, or rather offered me one in its place, as she saw I valued it as a memento; but when I told her I would prefer the broken one, found on the spot where I had first the happiness of

seeing her, she told me that I might keep it if I would wish to."

"And when and where did you meet her, my son?"

"Only the next week after. I was coming in from the channel, and steered my boat closer under the castle than usual, for I thought I saw the form of a young girl on the white beach. I was not deceived. It was the Lady Kate, gathering shells. Upon recognizing me sailing past, she beckoned to me to land. I did so, for I wished to return the ring. She at once began playfully to chide me for leaving the castle so abruptly, without waiting to be thanked by her father and brother and her friends for what I had done. I told her I did not wish to be thanked at all; but if anyone were to thank me, one word from her was a world of thanks. She then told me that she had been riding with her brother, who was an Oxford student then at home on a visit, ahead of her party, when a shot fired by him from his saddle at a heron had caused her horse to take fright and run off with her. 'My brother,' she said, 'followed me, but as I turned to the left, while he took to the right, he missed me; and but for you I should have been killed, for I could not have kept my saddle three minutes longer, as I was fast losing all presence of mind. You must come up to the castle and let my father know you,' she added. But I told her that I was too lowly to be noticed by nobles, and too proud to be compelled to feel their superiority. At this, she looked at me with a stare of beautiful surprise, and, shaking her head, she said, archly:—

" 'I fear you will be too proud to speak to me by and by.'

" 'Oh, no! you don't understand me, lady.'

" 'Yes I do, and, what is more, I respect you for your feeling,' she added. 'I can conceive how one like you must feel when you are compelled to endure the superiority of others, who may, in reality, be your inferiors. But you will not find my father such a nobleman. He knows how to appreciate merit; and as for my brother, I heard him say that he should find you out to thank you.'

“I then offered to her the ring, which, as I said, she permitted me to retain. Seeing that she liked the beautiful shells which were scattered on the beach, of which she had a basketful, but of indifferent value, I offered to bring her others, from the king’s rock beach, where they are to be found of such rare colors. I then sailed to the beach and landed, to take her basket, for our conversation had taken place while I was standing in my boat, about ten yards from the land, when a young man, clad as a hunter, followed by a couple of dogs, came round a jutting angle of the cliff. He was of the middle height, well made, with long flaxen hair flowing on his shoulders, a brown moustache, and a fair, red-and-white complexion. He was exceedingly handsome; but an air of angry surprise which he put on, upon discovering us, increased the disagreeable impression his naturally haughty bearing made upon me.

“I saw at a glance that he was a noble, and the exclamation of Lady Kate, ‘My brother!’ told me who he was without further introduction.”

CHAPTER III.

A HAUGHTY INTERRUPTION.

“THE young nobleman,” resumed Guilford, continuing his narrative to his mother, in the green embowered porch of the cottage, “stood for an instant regarding first one and then the other of us without a word. He then strode up and said haughtily:—

“ ‘ Who and what are you, that are so familiar as to hold converse with this lady, and with thy cap on, fellow ? ’ With these words he struck off my cap to my feet, and one of his dogs, taking it up, carried it off, tearing it with his teeth.

“ ‘ Wilmot, how can you be so rash ? ’ exclaimed Lady Catharine, with a mingled expression of pain for me and anger against him. ‘ This is the young man, Guilford Graham.’

“ ‘ And who, pray, is Guilford Graham ? ’ he repeated, sarcastically.

“ ‘ Have you forgotten the name of the brave youth, who, at the risk of his own life, saved mine ? ’

“ ‘ How should one remember every hind’s name ? So, young man, you are the clown that risked your life and broke the jaw of the best horse in my father’s stud ? for the horse came to the castle with his jaw broken as with a sledge-hammer, and we had to shoot him. You have a hand like Samson. But you did the thing well, though it cost a horse worth a thousand guineas.’

“ ‘ Brother, how can you speak of such a trifle, when my life was at stake ? ’

“ ‘ True, but a discreet person should save the one and not destroy the other. There, fellow, are four guineas. I dare

swear that thou hast not seen so much gold together before, and that it would take a year's fishing to give to thee in hand the same amount.'

"As he spoke, he threw the gold at my feet. I did not notice it. I had felt insulted by his manner as well as by his words and by this act. I did not deign to glance towards him, but I looked in the face of Lady Catharine. Her eyes were alight with just resentment. She felt that I had been insulted, peasant as I was.

" 'Wilmot, why do you reward courage in such a strange fashion? One would fancy you had found in this young man a foe, rather than one to whom you owe a debt of gratitude.'

" 'Gratitude to one like him!' answered the young Lord Vane, with a contemptuous glance at my coarse apparel. 'I have paid him for his service in gold. What fault can he find? By the rood! it would seem, from the familiar manner in which I found him holding converse with you, Kate, that he presumed more than becometh a hind. Fellow, get into thy boat and begone, and think not, because chance hath made thee the mean instrument of saving a high-born lady's life, that thou hast gage therefrom for speaking to her.'

" 'He did but offer to collect shells for me,' said the Lady Catharine, reproachfully. 'I called to him. He is no ways to blame.'

" 'Then it is you who are to blame, to descend to speak to a youth like this, who will boast in the ale-houses among his fellows that he has held tryst with the Lady Kate Vane.'

"At these words the eyes of the maiden flashed fire, but instantly filling with tears, she said:—

" 'You are ungenerous, Rudolph.'

"In the meanwhile," said Guilford, addressing his mother, "I stood amazed and burning with indignation; and I really believe that if he had not been the brother of the fair Lady Catharine, I should have struck him to the earth for his insulting words to her. But finding that my presence only made him more bitter towards her, and fearing a collision,

which might render it necessary for me to strike him in self-defence, I got into my boat, but taking the basket with me, resolved to redeem my promise to bring it to her on some more auspicious day, filled with the shells she so greatly admired. I therefore made sail and left them on the beach at the foot of the castle; but soon I saw them together making their way up the path to the gateway at the round tower."

"And then you made an enemy of him forever."

"It may be so. He soon afterwards left for Oxford, where he has remained the most of the time until three days ago, when he returned."

"Did you receive and take away the gold?"

"No; I saw him stoop and gather it up after I had sailed away. The obligation to me, therefore, on his part, remained in full force as at first."

"And hast thou seen the Lady Catharine since then, my son?" asked his mother, earnestly.

"Often and often, dearest mother; for it was not many days afterwards that I left for her upon the beach, while from the terrace of the castle she looked down and saw me, the basket of shells, which I soon beheld her descend and take up. I have met her in the forest; I have seen her at the castle on gala days; I have encountered her on the snowy beach by moonlight."

"You meet the Lady Catharine by moonlight? You say what oversteps the truth, I fear."

"Nay, mother, we have often met, and walked and discoursed together upon the glorious works of nature, the majesty of the sea, the mystery of the stars, the delights of friendship, the bliss of heaven, and upon everything good and beautiful. Ah, mother, it has been to me as if for the three years past I had been permitted to have companionship with an angel of intelligence and love. Oh, how she has elevated my soul, expanded my mind, enlarged my views, purified the gross in me, and cultivated the virtues which knew not how to grow right. If I am superior to what I

then was, if I am called by the villagers wiser and better than others, it is to her sweet teachings in those stolen hours which we have consecrated together to friendship."

"Guilford, you fill me with amazement. I tremble at what I hear you utter. Can all this be so? Yes, it must be. You could not deceive me; and besides, I have now in my mind numerous little circumstances which the revelation on your part gives me a full explanation of. How wonderful it all is! You, my son of an humble fisherman, the chosen friend and confidant of a noble and high-born maiden, the daughter of a lord! It is difficult to believe it. But it is said woman's heart, when it chooses, looks not to title, nor rank, nor dress, but for a kindred heart; and perhaps that, though one is born in the castle and the other at the foot of the castle, the same spirit may be animating your bosoms. But the Lady Kate is young; she has seen but little of the world. She is hardly conscious of the impassable gulf that lies between you and her own high station. The romance, sweet and pleasant as it has been to you, must be broken. Her hand will be asked by some proud noble, and she will give it to him, and then she will be ashamed that she has been so foolish as to descend to your level. Trust me, my dear boy, this wild dream must be broken. Let me advise you to see her no more. Better for your own feelings that you withdraw now from an intimacy that cannot be perpetual, which is so extraordinary, than wait to be cast off with infamy. She is now nineteen, and what pleased her at fifteen may disgust her now."

"You do not know her, my dear mother," answered the young man, his face lighting up with generous warmth in defence of Lady Kate. "She feels no differently towards me now than at all other times. She will never give her hand to any noble of them all."

"This is a bold speech. Wouldst thou bind her to thyself, Guilford? If, in the innocence and frankness of her nature, she has given her regards to the humble youth to whom she feels she owes her life, are you so ungenerous as to take

advantage of her gratitude, which, it would seem, is ready to give herself with it, in order that you may have the selfish pleasure of feeling that you are loved by a high-born maiden ? ”

“ Mother, you do me injustice. You do not understand either me or the Lady Catharine. I have bound her by no pledge. I have dared to exact no promises from her. I have not thought of any happiness or consummation of our pure friendship, beyond the sweet bliss of the present hour—the joy of her sweet presence.”

“ You are then both rash and imprudent. You are wasting a generous heart upon one who can never be more to you than she now is, and she is wasting upon you affections which can never find their fruition; for the natural tendency of such attachments as it appears exist between you and Lady Catharine, is a union by marriage, and to this result the opposite ranks you occupy in society must forever put a bar. You, therefore, are doing her irreparable injury, and endangering the wreck of her whole life’s happiness, by encouraging by your continued presence in her society, a passion which can only end in sorrow, tears and wretchedness to you both.”

“ I see, I see, dear mother. Your words have opened my eyes. I behold my position as you behold it, and am conscious that it is a false one. Mother, I will see her no more—no more—no more ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

A MOTHER'S COUNSEL.

THE young fisherman ventured the last word in a tone of sadness, and with his head bowed down upon his mother's hand, upon which hot tears dropped, one after another, like rain.

"Thou hast spoken well; thou hast spoken like a man. Heaven give thee strength to abide by thy words," she said impressively.

"No more!" he repeated, in a tone of unutterable anguish. "I see that I shall destroy her hopes, her happiness, her future, if I suffer this mad dream of bliss to go on. But it will rend my heart."

"Nay, be strong in a sense of rectitude and manly consciousness of acting right. Thou wilt not hesitate to sacrifice thyself for her, if thou lovest her."

"Love her!"

"Then reflect that it is for her whom you love you make this sacrifice of never beholding her more. As it is, she can never marry in her own rank, as becomes her; for thou hast her heart, for which, nevertheless, thou canst give her no return."

"No return? True, true. I can give her only my heart again. I have no rank, no castles, no place at court, no historic name, no wealth, no power to return to her. Mother, you are wiser than I, far wiser. The dream is past; I will see her but once more."

"Nay, not that once."

"Can I steal away from her, dear mother? Shall I cease my interviews with her without a word of explanation. Shall I add to our separation the barb of suspicion that I have

done aught that makes me ashamed to see her, or that she has given me aught of offence? Nay, it is becoming that we meet once more—to part forever.”

“Perhaps you are right, my son. I will trust to your good sense that this interview be so conducted as to release you both from any indiscreet pledges of fidelity into which you may both have unadvisedly fallen. When will you have this interview?”

“This very night.”

“The sooner the better for you both. Now, my boy, explain to me what you began to do when you sat down here—how your boat came so dreadfully wrecked.”

“I deserved it, I see, since we have had this talk together. I will explain in a few words. You know, perhaps, that young Lord Rudolph has returned to the castle within a few days?”

“I heard so from your Cousin Anne.”

“Anne?—yes; she knows everything that goes on at Castle Vane.”

“Anne speaks of the Lady Catharine in the warmest praise.”

“How can any one do otherwise? All love her who approach her; and alas, all may approach hereafter but me. I alone am to be exiled from her sweet presence. But hear what I have to say touching the injury done to my boat. While I was listlessly rocking on the swell, waiting for the fish to take the hook, and gazing upon the towers of the castle, and thinking of Lady Catharine, I fell asleep and dreamed. I dreamed that I had won her hand, and that I led her up to the high altar in Westminster Abbey, where a mitred archbishop united us in holy marriage. I recollect that the king was present, and all his nobles, and”——

“The king!” exclaimed his mother, with surprise; “you know we have no king—the judges have put him to death.”

“I know it, mother; but in my dream I saw the king, or a king, and he seemed to smile on me; and I thought I was clad in the robes of an earl, and wore an earl’s coronet.”

"These dreams are nothing, my son."

"But this made a deep impression upon me when I awoke; but I must confess my heart sank within me when my opening eyes fell only upon my coarse fishing clothes and poor fishing boat, with a few lines, and hooks, and tubs, that constituted all my earthly wealth."

"A fit gift to bestow upon a noble bride, Guilford," said his mother, in a slightly ironical tone, quite unusual to her. "Take a lesson from your dream, and let your common sense see that you are never likely to exchange your poor estate as a fisherman for the regal splendor you beheld in Westminster Hall."

"You are right, mother. I will try and impress the lesson upon my heart. It was past noon when I awoke, and I found that the flood tide had swung my vessel close in under the land, and that Castle Vane was towering high in the air above my head. As the day was still cloudless and unfit for fishing, I landed and roamed along the beach, and endeavored to detect traces of the small footstep which had the evening before wandered there by my side. I also gathered every pretty shell that met my eye for the grotto which Lady Catharine was making in the garden of the castle. In this pleasurable occupation the afternoon wore away, and at length I returned to my boat. But imagine my joy when I beheld the Lady Catharine seated in it, engaged in sketching the castle and rock.

" 'I saw your boat, and took the liberty, Guilford,' she said, smiling, in that captivating way which almost made me lose my senses. 'I at first stood on the large stone half surrounded by the water there, but the tide coming in, I was afraid I should be caught by it, and so I exchanged it for the boat. I see you have some beautiful shells.'"

" 'Yes, Lady Kate,' I answered, with that trembling of the voice without which I never could speak to her. 'I have some here we have never seen. But you do not get a good view of the castle so nearly under it. Let me push out further, so that you can embrace the whole at one view.'"

“She thanked me, and getting into the boat, I pushed from the beach, and hoisting the sail, ran out a hundred fathoms, and there brought my little vessel to, and sat down and watched her as with taste and skill she transferred the outlines of her father’s castle to a leaf of the portfolio before her. While she drew we conversed, I know not about what; but the time flew by unmarked. She had finished her sketch, and was admiring its faithfulness, when a flaw of wind suddenly struck us from the gap in the cliff, and blew so hard that I was compelled to run before it for ten or twelve minutes. But after getting an offing of half a league, it decreased so much in strength that I was able to lay up to it, and prepared to return to the foot of the castle rock. But Lady Kate, seeing the danger was passed, and delighted at finding herself so far out in the channel, entreated me not to return immediately, but sail further out and let her try and catch a fish or two with me. To this I consented, and reaching the fishing ground, I was soon engaged in teaching her how to catch the fish, which now began to take the hook freely. While we were thus engaged, my whole thoughts full of the happy consciousness of her presence, we were suddenly startled by a loud shout. Looking up, I beheld a green, gilded yacht, of about twenty tons burthen, standing towards us at a rapid rate hauled close on the wind. At her helm I recognized the haughty figure of Lord Rudolph, whose face was livid with fierce passion. There were half a dozen other persons on board, four of whom were the crew. He steered straight for me, and I saw that his intention was to sink me. He called me by all manner of opprobrious epithets as he came near, and I saw that he was bent on equally destroying both Lady Catharine and myself. My sails were brailed up, and I had no time to get out of the way; but seeing he was aiming to strike me amidships, I succeeded with an oar in turning the bow of my boat so as to receive the shock there. The moment of collision two or three of the crew, by his previous order, sprang on board, and taking the Lady Catharine up, regained the yacht with

her. The shock drove the bow of my boat in, and she began to fill. The yacht, recoiling from the contact, glided past across the bows, and as Lord Vane saw me making efforts to keep my boat from going down, he laughed like a fiend, and then deliberately aiming a shot gun at me, discharged it. I should have been killed by the ball if I had not thrown myself upon my face.

“The next moment the yacht was far to leeward, and I was left alone with my sinking boat. What a moment of shame, disappointment and bitterness was that to me! What an hour of happiness had been suddenly interrupted! I now turned my whole attention to saving my boat and my life. But my ears were rended by the cries of Lady Kate to her brother, not to let me perish. But I could hear his scornful laugh only in reply.

“By great exertions, my dear mother, I reached the cove as you saw; but if I had been half a mile further out, I should certainly have been lost. Now, mother, you know all. I have unfolded to you the secret of my life. You are my only confidant. Perhaps I have done wrong in encouraging this sweet friendship on the part of Lady Kate. But should I dash the cup of bliss to the ground? I was not wise enough to know that it was charged with sorrow to us both. I can now look on all with your eyes. I see that I have been in the wrong, and that I have been inflicting a positive injury upon her whom I would die to serve. I see it—I see it all. I cannot so much blame Lord Vane for wishing to break off a friendship that was laden with so much future evil.”

“I am so glad to see you take this view of it, Guilford. It shows me that you are still as good and generous and just as I have always believed you to be. No doubt that Lady Catharine loves you. But do you think—now hear me put the question with calmness—do you think she would listen to you with anything less than with surprise and scorn, if you proposed seriously for her hand?”

Guilford shook his head, but made no reply.

"I fear that such a proposal from you would open her eyes, which seem to be so strangely blinded, and lead her to see the true position in which you stand to each other. It would break the spell effectually. Doubtless she, as well as yourself, has never asked of her heart and judgment where all this would end."

"I will see her once more, and then we part forever, unless"— Here a certain proud light shone in his fine eyes, and he rose to his feet.

"Unless what, Guilford?" asked his mother, with anxiety, fearing all his resolutions were to be turned into thin air.

"Unless I can render myself *worthy* of her, mother."

"Worthy of her! Indeed, so far as truth and honor and manly comeliness are concerned, you are worthy of the love of any maiden, methinks, Guilford; but these count nought in the sum of qualifications which he who would wed a lord's daughter must bring to his aid."

"I *may* yet make myself worthy of her, mother. In the books of history which she has loaned me, and which we have read together, are accounts of lowly-born youths having risen to thrones, and to wed kings' daughters. Nothing is impossible to love and ambition!"

"That was in the days of Romaunt, long ago, my boy. Such things do not happen now."

"No one knows. What is enacting now? Who is President of England, and who sits in the seat of the long line of descended kings? Is it not Oliver Cromwell, who rose from the ranks of the people? Even Lord Rudolph Vane must lift his cap to this man of humble origin."

"True, my son, the people have the power."

"Yes, and the nobles hold their castles and their coronets at the will of the Lord Protector. Because I am a fisherman now, shall I of necessity always be one? Thanks to the teachings of the Lady Catharine, I have knowledge and learning, and know how to hold such place as my good fortune may perchance elevate me to. From this day I doff the fisher's jacket, and go and offer my services to the

admiral of the fleet, now in the Thames and preparing to sail against the Dutch. There all grades are open to talent and aspiration; and with the star of Lady Kate's love shining ever above the horizon of my future, I shall yet win some place worthy of her."

"Ah, my son, you do not reflect that a successful officer under Cromwell's power would be an unsuccessful wooer for the hand of a daughter of so proud and royal a noble as Lord Vane. Dost thou forget how these nobles hate the Protector?"

"True, true, I should only defeat my aim," he answered, gloomily, as the sunshine of hope faded away into the shadows of his darkening destiny. "And what is more true, I am in heart a king's subject. I have been taught by you and my father to honor the king, and to look upon Cromwell as a usurper. Nothing but the hope—now dashed to the ground—of winning Lady Kate through honors gained under the Protector's flag, would have suggested to me the idea of offering myself to him. My heart is with the exiled and hunted young King Charles; but to share his fallen fortunes I should be no nearer my ambitious hopes. Mother, advise me; I know not what to do. I can never forget Lady Catharine. I must love her while life endures; and while I live, it must be with the faint, far-off hope that kind fate will one day smile upon my love, and with the sunshine of joy dissipate all the clouds that now hang around me."

"My advice is, my boy, to remain where you are, and try and forget the Lady Catharine, as much so as if she were dead and buried."

"Be it so; I will try," answered Guilford, in tones scarcely audible to his mother's ears. He then suffered her to embrace him, to breathe a word or two of consolation into his heavy heart, and then entered the house.

It was already twilight, for the sun had gone down behind the blue Hampshire hills while they sat in the green porch, holding the conversation we have above recorded. In a few minutes he came forth and was passing out of the gate.

"Leave no room, Guilford, for a second interview," whispered his mother, impressively.

"It shall be the last," he answered, with deep emotion modulating the sounds of his voice.

At the gate he met a fair young girl of eighteen, clad in a neat chintz gown, and coarse but becoming straw hat.

"Good-evening, Cousin Anne," he said, as he passed her.

"Good-evening, Guilford," she responded.

"Aunt, what makes Guilford so sad?" she asked, looking after him.

"He has a heavy sorrow at heart, child," answered the mother, in a tone of sympathy. "Heaven hold him strong under it."

CHAPTER V.

COUSIN ANNE GREY.—A SURPRISE.

THE maiden who betrayed this interest in the young man was Anne Grey, his cousin, and the adopted child of her aunt, his mother. She was a beautiful girl of eighteen, with dark brows and eyes, and handsome cheeks and lips, and a neat figure, buoyant with the elasticity of health. She had daily employment at the castle by Lady Vane, who gave occupation to several maidens of humble degree in the art of embroidery, a pursuit then much in vogue with the high-born dames of England.

Every morning for two years past, Anne had gone to the castle to pass the day in the large hall or working-room, where the lady of the castle, seated in the midst of her half-score of maidens, either taught them difficult figures in pattern by her own example, or passed from one to the other giving directions.

“Have you completed that battle-piece of Hastings’s field yet?” asked dame Graham of Anne, as the latter seated herself by the frugal supper prepared for her and Guilford, but which the latter had left untouched.

“Not yet, aunt; we expect to complete it by June. We have been already twenty-one months upon it. We had to wait three weeks for the arrival of the young lord before we could finish his figure.”

“What, does my young lord figure in the tapestry?”

“Yes, as one of the king’s youthful knights. He has taken a good many sittings, and the portrait is to the life; but Lady Vane draws and works in the features herself, while we only work the surtout and the armor.”

“What think you of my young lord?”

"Something bold and free, methinks."

"So I fancied, if he be like other nobles of his degree. I hope, child, he hath not noticed thee."

"I like not his looks at all, aunt. He hath twice spoken to me in a manner that has made my cheeks burn. I would gladly find some excuse not to go up to the castle until he shall be gone back to London."

"Tell not thy cousin Guilford of this."

"Nay, he would care little. He careth not for me," she answered, changing color.

"Ah, and is it this way blows the wind, my child?"

"Which way, aunt?"

"I see thou lovest Guilford more than thou shouldst as a relative."

"I did not say so, aunt. Yet who can help liking him? Does not every one like him? Nay, I have heard the fair Lady Catharine speak of him to me with passing commendation. But Guilford never thinks of me or any other maiden."

"And how like you Lady Catharine?"

"She is fair and good as an angel. We all love her. She is nothing like Lord Rudolph, her brother; and methinks he is something hoarse towards her betimes, as becometh not a brother."

"So I hear."

"And what aileth Guilford to-night?"

"He is ill at ease. I warrant me he'll be better and wiser to-morrow. But here comes in some neighbor. See who it is."

Anne rose up, and advancing to the door started back with a cry of surprise as she beheld two of Cromwell's soldiers, armed with harquebus and broad-sword, and wearing the well-known badge of the parliamentary army. Instantly dame Graham, with that instinctive sense of propriety and self-possession which never forsook her, though she trembled in her inmost soul at beholding the shadows of the two men crossing her threshold, advanced and said civilly;—

"Enter, friends, and refresh yourselves. We were just at supper; if you will take seats, you shall cheerfully have whatever our poor larder can furnish."

The soldiers sat down without ceremony, as if they felt perfectly at home and were accustomed to the civility which they met with. One of them was a tall, thin, cadaverous man, with dark, angular brows, sallow cheeks, and straight, black hair for a beard, while that upon his head was cropped short like that of a modern convict. He was armed in a formidable manner, and was altogether a formidable-looking person—a sort of cross between a Puritan saint and a robber of the Rhine. His comrade was shorter by a head, girded full twenty inches more by the waist, had a bald, bullet head, and no beard. His eyes were small and twinkling and the corners of his mouth which naturally were inclined to turn laughingly upwards, were drawn down in a sanctimonious curve, that each moment required his attention to keep so. The names of these two worthies were respectively "Strait-gate" and "Broad-way." The first five minutes Strait-gate occupied in saying a long grace, to which Broadway responded an unctuous amen. They then fell to work upon the fish and ashes-cakes before them; and having taken off the edge of their appetite, they began to use their eyes now in scanning the room, then the face and dress of dame Graham, and lastly, but more lingeringly, the pretty countenance of Anne Grey, who sat aloof in the window, trying to withdraw as much from close observation as she could.

"So, dame, thou seemest to subsist by the travail of fishing? Verily, it is a good trade, and thou shouldst thrive. This comely maiden is thy daughter, I do peradventure."

This was spoken by Strait-gate.

"My niece, your worship."

"Come hither, maid, and let me see if thou art well-favored," said Broadway. "They do say that much eating of fish doth improve the complexion."

But Anne, as soon as she saw that she was particularly noticed, quickly tripped out of the cottage. 3

“ Verily and yea, the maiden hath fled. Truly, she hath no need to fear the soldiers of the Lord and of Gideon. We war against kings, and not against women.”

“ And how fares my Lord Cromwell, gentlemen ? ”

“ Marry come up! how should he but do well who is next to King David in power, and Solomon in wisdom ? Nevertheless, thou showest thy reverence for him, good dame, by asking. Where is thy husband ? ”

“ Dead, these seven years, sir.”

“ Hast thou no man about ? ” asked Broad-way, cocking his half-shut eye at the oars and sails that stood in the corner.

“ I have a son, a young man of four-and-twenty.”

“ Where is he, dame ? ”

“ He has gone forth on some affair of his own.”

“ Very well; when he comes back we shall doubtless see him—for, by your leave, we will quarter with you a few days.”

“ Such poor comforts as my humble roof affords are at your service,” answered the dame, thankful that there were but two of them when there might have been more.

After the men had well eaten, and quaffed strong waters from well-filled flasks which they carried at their belts, they walked forth, saying they would ere long be back to stay for the night. They had not been five minutes departed, when a man entered with the familiar air of a village gossip. He was dressed in a patched and torn doublet, hose down at the leg, a coarse tunic, and slouched hat. Moreover, his fiery-red nose showed that he was much given to ale-house potations.

“ Ah, dame, how be it all wi’ ye ? How is Master Guilford ? Strange news come to town. Stirring times these—stirring, piping-hot times! Thank the Lord I was born in these stirring times! ”

With this, the new-comer rubbed his palms together, and spoke with great volubility, like a man over-earnest to be the first to turn the faucet of a barrel of news.

“ Why, what hath happened, Master Digby ? ”

"Then you've not heard it? Good! you'll soon know, for they'll be upon you. Why, a whole company o' parliamentary soldiers marched down into the port just at sunset, and have stacked their arms at the Whale and Gudgeon. There they are, drinking and singing psalms, and looking as warlike as Gog and Magog. Oh, it's terrible to see their long broadswords and open-mouth harquebuses, at the end of every one of which hangs a true man's life!"

"We've had two of them here already," said the dame.

"What! you don't say they have been here?"

"There is where they have eaten but ten minutes ago. They say they are going to quarter here."

"Dear, bless us, what stirring times! But did they tell you what they came here for? I warrant me I have a piece of news for you yet."

"We did not ask them, and I did not care to be too inquisitive."

"Just like you. Well, I know. Listen, Miss Anne. The king's son, Prince Charles, has made a break from some place where they had him penned in, away off in Scot's country, a-north; and the Protector's got certain news he's trying to fly across the seas. So, you understand, he has sent vessels to every port where he could, to keep watch and to examine every boat that puts off; and here, on the south of England, he has sent troops to guard the coast, and especially every place where there are fishing boats. So at this moment there is not a chance for the prince to get out of England without being seen and taken. All along the coast Cromwell's soldiers are quartered, and are to keep strict watch. All this I learned from one of the troop who used to be an old crony of mine when the old king was alive."

"Poor Prince Charles!" sighed the fisherman's widow; "he is, I fear, destined to fall into the hands of his enemies."

"We must speak low when we mention his name," answered Digby. "But good-night. I must go, for I've

got to tell the news to a good many. Stirring times—stirring times! Good-night, fair Miss Anne!”

With these words, the village news-bearer hastened from the cottage.

“I do really hope they will have their labor for their pains,” said Anne. “Poor Prince Charles has been hunted till he has no place left to hide his head.”

“It is to be hoped he may escape.”

“Aunt, there is some one looking in upon us at the back window!” suddenly exclaimed Anne.

The dame turned her head, and as she did so the window was raised, and a man stepped into the room. His appearance struck them with surprise and curiosity. He wore a plain peasant’s dress, soiled and travel-worn, an old fur cap, that covered his eyes and nearly concealed his features, which were pale and well-shaped. There was an air of superiority about him that led the dame to suspect that he was some one of the nobles in disguise, who were lurking about England in considerable numbers with prices set upon their heads. He seemed ready to sink with fatigue, as, supporting himself on the edge of the table, he said faintly:—

“You are a woman—you are compassionate—give me a few hours’ shelter. I am pursued, and throw myself on your mercy!”

“Come, follow me,” quietly said the dame, speaking with decision and promptness. “Anne, place that food in his hands.”

A plate of provisions from the table was handed to him by the maiden, and he followed dame Graham out of the room like one accustomed to ask and find shelter in this manner. There was a ladder in the adjoining apartment which led to a loft.

“Ascend this and you will find a bed and security. Make no noise. As soon as my son comes we will seek a more secure place of shelter. There are two of the parliamentary soldiers quartered in the house, but they shall not suspect your presence. Who you are I ask not; I only wish that it

were the prince, save that I should be grieved to see any prince so hardly driven by his foes."

He pressed her hand gratefully, and ascended the ladder, which, at her direction, he drew up after him. He then closed the opening, so that no sign of the trap was apparent from below. She then returned to Anne, whom she impressed with the importance of keeping the secret of the presence of the fugitive from every one.

"Have you any idea who it is, aunt?"

"I have my guess. It is either the prince himself or one of his friends."

"Oh, that it were the prince, and we could get him safe across the channel!" exclaimed the lovely girl, with warmth.

"That is sooner said than executed. I sincerely pray that it may not be Prince Charles, for I do not see how we could protect him. These soldiers will doubtless pry into every nook and corner of the house. But Guilford will soon be in, and then I will consult with him."

CHAPTER VI.

A CONCEALED GUEST.

THE good dame then went to work to prepare some drink of ale and French brandy, which latter article the fishermen on the south coast, from their nearness to France, had always cheaply and in ample quantities in their household. Having made the potation hot, and seasoned it well with spices, she sent Anne with it to give it to their concealed guest, while she herself remained to watch the entrance to the cottage, that no one might come in unobserved. Anne, on entering the back apartment of the hut, carefully locked and bolted the door between, and then drawing a rough table beneath the trap, she got upon it and knocked lightly with the end of a broom upon the ceiling above her head.

“Sir cavalier,” she said, softly.

“What, maiden?” asked the voice of the concealed fugitive, speaking through a crevice in the floor.

“Open, and take this warm negus which my aunt hath prepared for thee. We know you must suffer from thirst and fatigue, for we have heard of the great hardships the friends of Prince Charles have gone through to keep from being observed.”

The trap was carefully lifted, and the arm of the wanderer was thrust down for the flagon which the maiden reached up to him. As he took it he tapped her hand with his fingers, in token of his gratitude, and said, in a voice which had become habitually subdued to the lowest undertone:—

“Thanks and blessings upon thee and thy good aunt, maiden. Heaven surely directed me hither. Are you confident that I can be concealed here?”

“At least till Cousin Guilford can find some other place.”

“And who is thy Cousin Guilford?”

“The son of my aunt; and though but a fisherman’s son, and himself a fisherman, he is a true friend to the prince, and prays every night for his safety, as well as do I and my aunt.”

“Thanks, thanks, maiden! This beverage will revive me, and make me forget my day’s fatigues.”

“Quick, sir cavalier—shut the trap down; I hear voices.”

The stranger immediately closed the trap, and leaping to the floor from the table, the maiden removed it against the wall, and unbolting the door returned to the front room. Voices of men in loud talk were still heard outside.

“Didst give it to him?” asked her aunt.

“Yes, aunt; and he was so grateful and so civil spoken; and his hand, as he reached it down, was as fair as a born lady’s.”

“Without doubt; these court cavaliers do nought of work, being rich, but aid the king with their heads in council. How fortunate it was he did not come in when the soldiers were here!”

“Perhaps he was watching outside the window till they were away.”

“But it was bold in him to come in when they had so lately left.”

“Poor gentleman, aunt! Perhaps he had no other chance for safety. I have heard a story of a hunted deer, after being pressed from every covert, at length fly for shelter beneath the horse of the hunter. But here come the men.”

“Now, Anne, let not our looks or manner or words betray to these soldiers that we have a secret to keep.”

While the good woman was giving this piece of caution to her niece, the two parliamentary troopers came in, making noise enough with their heavy boots and jingling swords for half a score of modern dragoons.

“Well, mistress, we have been taking a survey of thy premises around, walking about thereof, as the Israelites circumvented the walls of Jericho; but, verily, not seven

times, for we had no desire that thy walls should fall down, considering that we look for them to give us shelter for to-night. Here, maiden, take the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

With this Broad-way, who had seated his unwieldy form upon a bench by the table, unbuckled his huge sword and handed it to Anne, who took it, though it required no little strength to lift it, with its iron scabbard, and hung it upon a wooden peg near the window.

"And take thou this fiery sword, lass, and put it on yonder becket," said Strait-gate, with a solemn, nasal drawl. "Phuff! verily, brother Broad-way, I smell the savor of strong waters, spiced with fragrance as the incense of Aaron, that flowed down his garment skirts unto."

"Yes, the flavor thereof ascendeth to my nostrils like the odors of the lily of the valley of many colors. Dame, whence ariseth this delectable odor?" asked Broad-way, snuffing the air of the room about him like a bull of Bashan; while Strait-gate, erect and thin-visaged, rolled his eyes on all sides to discover whence came this fragrance which had so greatly captivated their senses.

"It is but the fumes of a negus which I have been making. My son will be in soon, and as the night is something chilly, and as he has gone out without his supper, I would give him some refreshment when he comes in."

"Verily, thou art a mother in Israel," answered Broad-way. "Suppose thou regardest me as thy son in Jacob and thy posterity in Abraham, and give me of the negus even, verily, as Jacob gave to Esau of the pottage when he was a-hungry."

Dame Graham rose at once, and taking from a small cupboard an earthen mug, which held about a quart, she poured from it into two cups all that she had reserved for Guilford of what she had made for the concealed guest.

The two soldiers had no sooner inhaled and tasted the drink, than they manifested their approbation of her skill in concocting agreeable potations.

“Verily,” said Strait-gate, “this is richer than the wines of Judea and the dew of the little hills of Hermon.”

“Yea, verily, it is the dew of Lebanon,” answered Broadway, with unction.

“The good dame must fill up the quart measure once more; for verily, with such strength as this giveth to the arm of a servant of the Lord, we shall overthrow our enemies and discomfit them!”

“Verily, brother Strait-gate, verily, till not a dry bone standeth in the valley of Ajalon. Come hither, maiden, for thou art fair and comely to look upon; come hither, and sit upon my knee, that I may discourse to thee touching the wiles of the devil and the temptations of this world of vanities.”

“Nay, brother, the maiden will do better to sit where she is; for thou shouldst not put thyself in the way of evil, seeking to save others from perdition.”

“Anne,” said the good dame, “come hither and take this pail and go to the spring and fill it with water, that I may make more negus for these sons of Jacob.”

Anne very willingly complied, and was not a little gratified when her aunt whispered to her as she gave her the bucket, “Remain without until thy cousin returns. These men will be rude to thee in their cups. There is water enough in the house without that thou art sent for.”

“But they will be rude to thee.”

“No, I fear them not, child. Keep thou away from them all thou canst.”

“Marry come up, maiden!” said Broadway, as she passed him; “stay and let me give thee a holy kiss.”

“Yes, a kiss of peace, verily, maiden!” chimed in Strait-gate, with a hypocritical twang through his nose. “Dost thou not remember the Scripture records that Isaac kissed Rebecca? Come hither, and let us kiss thee and talk to thee of the vanity of youth and the perils of comeliness.”

But Anne, blushing and terrified, bounded past the pious covenanters and gained the outside of the door. But she

fled from the arms of the men of war to fall into the arms of a fine-looking youth of her own station, who was in the act of knocking for admission as she opened the door.

"Why, Robin!" she exclaimed, as she withdrew her form from his arms, which had inclosed her almost of necessity, so completely she came into them.

"And you, Anne! Whither with such haste? Oh, I see, you have the bucket. Let me fetch for thee."

"Nay, speak low, and come right away from the door. If you must talk, talk at the spring. There are two of those dreadful troopers in the house."

"What, Cromwell's brigands?" repeated the young fellow, in tones that rang like a Damascus blade.

"Hush!" she cried, pressing her small hand against his mouth to stop his words. "If you are overheard you are lost. Come with me, quickly, and I will tell you all that has happened."

He took the pail from her, and followed her light step across a stile and into a remote corner of a paddock, where, beneath a clump of alders, bubbled a sparkling spring, with an abundance of water, which, overrunning, sought its way in a brooklet to the sea, five hundred yards off.

"You seem disturbed, Anne; have these troopers been insolent?" demanded the young man, who was plainly of a fiery temper, and had a profound regard for the maiden.

"When did you ever hear of these soldiers being beneath a roof that they were not insolent? Beshrew me! they would have kissed me if I would have suffered it of their ugly, great hairy mouths!"

"I will kill them both!"

"Nay, Robin, that would be to the death of three men—for assuredly thou wouldst be the third. They did not kiss me, however, for I ran away."

"The hounds! to presume to think of what I hardly dare dream of—pressing thy sweet lips!"

"Nay, Robin, don't talk of love now. You may stay here and keep me company till Guilford comes home, if you wish."

"Ah, Anne, you are ever so cruel to me. Why do I woo and sue, and woo in vain?" said the young man, seating himself by her side on the stone bench that half encircled the spring. "Do you compel me to sigh for you, and love you, and live only with your thought, while you treat me so disdainfully?"

"I love you, Robin, but I do not love you yet well enough to be your wife. If I ever marry any one but — it shall be you."

"But who? Whose name fills the space that you only breathed?"

"Do you not guess?" asked the ingenuous girl.

"I can think of no one but Guilford."

"You are right. It is Guilford who alone keeps me from loving you as you ought to be loved. I have nothing against you; I am grateful for selecting me out of all the maidens of the hamlet; but I do love Guilford."

"Only as a cousin?"

"I wish it were only as a cousin. I fear I love him with all my heart."

"Happy Guilford! He is my best friend—he destroys my happiness. But why do I ask the question? Who can help loving thee, Anne, that knows thee?"

"Frankly then, I fear he loves me only as a cousin, and has no suspicion of my attachment for him. That makes me wretched. I fear his heart is pre-engaged."

"Would that it were."

"It would then break the dream of my life, and I should perhaps awake, Robin, to the realities of thy love. You see I am frank and open-hearted with you. Your long attachment for me demands frankness and the absence of all mystery."

"You are goodness itself! If, then, Guilford should be discovered to have given his heart to another, may I then hope, dearest Anne?"

"Yes; for there is no one next to him I think so highly of as you."

This undisguised expression of her feelings filled the young man with joy. He pressed her hand to his lips with devotion and ardor, and she could see that his features were animate with hope and joy.

As they sat by the spring they heard the voices of the two tipsy troopers singing through their noses a long-winded psalm, the sounds of which reaching the ears of other soldiers quartered about in other huts, inspired them also with devotional psalmody, and soon the whole village was roaring with a noise of singing, which came louder from the village inn than from any other quarter.

CHAPTER VII.

A FUGITIVE'S ESCAPE.

WHEN Guilford left the threshold of the cottage to take his way towards Castle Vane, in order to obtain a final interview with the beautiful and high-born maiden who had given him the preference of her pure affections, he walked for some minutes at the quick, impetuous step which his agitated feelings prompted. But after losing sight of the gate of the hut, and he had come upon the white sand beach, on which the moonbeams shone like silver, and upon the hard, marble-like floor of which the sparkling waves unrolled themselves like countless blue scrolls edged with pearl, the sweet influences of the scene carried quiet and comparative serenity to his soul. Gradually his footsteps slackened, and at length he came to a full stop and looked off and upward.

“Why should I let a storm rage in my bosom when all nature is so peaceful? The blue skies are soft and fair, and the stars sparkle in them like celestial eyes, looking peace and joy on earth, while the heavens of my soul are clouded, and not a star of hope is glimmering in their wide horizon. Why,” he mused, “why should I let mere feelings torture me so that I am more like one bereft of reason at the idea of losing Lady Catharine, than a sane man? Let me borrow peace and calmness from the ocean, the sky, the stars, the whole repose of nature. I will be calm! I will reflect upon all this which has come upon me with firmness and honesty of conviction. My mother is right; I am doing the Lady Catharine wrong by thus holding her affections. My mother is right; she can never look upon me as her husband. She is infatuated. We have both been blind. I will be the first

to break the spell. She will respect me the better for it. I will act as becomes a man of honor. She shall never have reason to despise me. But," he added, as he paced slowly along the glittering beach, and mechanically picked up a shining shell for her, "how shall I obtain an interview with her without encountering her brother? Not that I fear him; but my hand would shrink from contact with one so nearly related to her. No doubt he would not hesitate to slay me on the first sight, and therefore did I bring weapons with me; but I shall use them only in self-defence."

He now proceeded along the beach for two hundred yards further, when he came to a jutting part of the cliff, on which the castle stood, which, advancing across the beach some yards into the water, stopped further progress on foot; but on the other side of this projecting wall of the precipice, the beach was continued, broad and white as before, for more than a league, and was the common way taken by the inhabitants along the coast from one hamlet to the other. But as the projecting cliff would have broken off all communication between the two parts of this beach pathway, two small boats had been immemorially kept there, one on one side and the other on the opposite side, for those who passed that way to row themselves round the spur of the rock.

As the path by which Guilford usually visited the garden of the castle lay around the cliff, he now approached the little skiff, which had painted on its stern, "Castle Vane," it being the property of Lord Vane; he suddenly heard a loud shouting of numerous voices in the direction of the hamlet in his rear, and one or two discharges of harquebuses. The voices continued to advance, and looking back with surprise, and wondering at the cause, he saw far distant a single man running along the beach at his fleetest speed. His dark form was distinctly relieved against the white, moon-lit sand. The next moment, not a hundred and fifty yards behind him, came two others, who seemed in hot pursuit. Guilford had already placed his foot in the boat, and held the oar in his hand; but he remained motionless, watching the advance of

the fugitive, who each moment was gained upon by his pursuers. He now began to feel an interest in him, as every generous mind will instantly take part with the weakest; and this interest was not lessened when the pursuers increased to seven men, who shouted:—

“The sword of the Lord and Gideon! Death to the son of Anak! Slay the son of Belial!”

“They are covenanters in chase of a loyalist,” said Guilford, biting his lip. “If he reaches here in good time, I will agree to save him at all risks.”

At this moment he saw the fugitive stop, as his nearest pursuer was not twenty yards off, turn round, and deliberately fire at him. The man fell, and the fugitive once more bounded on his way. This bold and cool act elevated him not a little in the estimation of so brave a spirit as that of Guilford; and he watched the approach of the hunted loyalist, as he supposed him to be, with the deepest solicitude. A second pursuer, coming too near, shared the fate of the first; but a horse-trooper coming at spur-speed on the beach gained so rapidly on him that Guilford felt that, unless the man had another shot left, he would be taken. That he had not, Guilford saw very clearly by the almost superhuman efforts now made by the man to escape from the horseman.

“I have a pistol!” cried Guilford, with admiration. “These troopers are our natural foes. Shall I stand here and see a brave man taken, and perhaps slain before my face? It may be the prince himself for aught I know. I will give him all the aid I can, whosoever he be!”

He then pushed the skiff a little out from the beach, and placed the oars so that they could be used instantly, and then hastened to meet the fugitive, who ran heavily, as if he had nearly lost his wind.

“Courage, my friend!” shouted Guilford. “I have a shot for the trooper! Run a little further, and there is a boat to escape in.”

The sound of the encouraging voice of the young fisherman seemed to give new spirits to the pursued stranger, who

waved his hand, and came forward at a more vigorous pace. The horseman also increased his speed; and when the fugitive had got within twenty fathoms of the boat, the trooper was alongside of him, with his broad claymore sweeping around above his head, ready to descend upon the neck of the royalist. Guilford was not near enough to aid in warding off the blow, which the fugitive could not do, having, as Guilford perceived, no sword, and but one hand; and the young fisherman brought his huge pistol to bear upon the broad chest of the trooper, and fired it. The man received the ball in his heart, and tumbled from his horse upon the beach, with the sword which he held aloft, ready to aim the blow, lying broken under him in the sand.

"Gallantly done, young man!" cried the fugitive. "You have saved my life!" And he pressed Guilford's hand to his bosom.

"We have not a moment to lose, my lord!" said Guilford. "Quickly, into the boat!"

"I need no urging, my brave fellow," answered the stranger, stepping into the boat, which Guilford in a few seconds rowed out from the land and around the rock, behind which he disappeared as two more horsemen came up to the fallen body of their companion. One of them, with reckless hardihood, spurred his horse into the sea, and compelled him to swim out, as if his rider were resolved to let no obstacle prevent him from capturing the fugitive. But the weight of the man, who was gigantic in size, and the terror of the animal, after a short distance brought on a terrible struggle between life and death; and, in vain attempting to extricate himself from the saddle and stirrups, the man sunk with his horse and disappeared forever.

At this tragical result the other troopers paused on the shore, and as the cliff presented an insurmountable barrier to their further progress, the escape of the fugitive was effectually secured.

"They cannot come after us here," said Guilford, as he drove the boat against the beach beyond the rock.



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"Add to what brave young man am I indebted for my safety?" asked the stranger, who pressed the hand of the young fisherman with strong emotion.

"I am but a fisherman, my lord, who lives in the hamlet from which you came, and by good fortune having an errand this way, was enabled to afford you the assistance I have."

"And good aid it was, and gallantly well lent to me, for you have as steady a hand and as true an eye with a pistol as any king's cavalier of the guards. What is thy name?—for I would befriend thee, if some day I have it in my power."

"Guilford Graham, sir cavalier," answered Guilford, who could see by the dress and bearing of the stranger that he was a man of very different stamp from the Roundheads. As the moonlight shone full upon him, Guilford could see that he was a well-made man, of thirty-seven or eight years, with long black locks floating to his neck, his air proud, and his bearing bold and resolute. But his curiosity was awakened to know how he had lost his right hand. This curiosity was perhaps apparent in Guilford's looks, for the stranger said:—

"I suppose you would like to know who I am? You ought to know, but in these days it is not safe always for men to carry their appellations posted on their breast-plates. You say we are safe here. It may be that you are; but as for me, I am not safe on any foot of England's soil on the Sussex coast. Look you! Hast thou seen any sail in the offing towards the sundown?"

"Methinks, my lord"—

"Nay, how dost thou know me?"

"I do not, my lord. I did give thee but the chance title of respect."

"Drop it, lest it be not over-safe. Call me captain, and thou wilt have a handle to my name. What didst thou see?"

"Far in the south and west I thought I saw the upper sails of a brigantine, standing coastwise; but I was too much taken up with my own affairs just then to give it or its course especial heed."

“ You shall know enough of me, young man, to know that I am expecting a vessel in this night from the channel to take me off. Pull out a bit from the shore, if thine own business be not too pressing, and let me look about. I shall feel more secure with an acre or two of broad sea-water lying between me and the main. Any moment these troopers may circumvent us by the castle road, and pounce upon us.”

“ That is true. I will row out with you a mile or two, and if you see nothing of the craft you look for, captain, I will land you on such part of the coast as you may name, if it be not so far off that I cannot return hither by midnight.”

“ An affair of love thou hast on thy hands, I’ll be sworn for you,” answered the captain, laughing; “ but I will not keep thee long. If I see nothing of the boat I look for in an hour, I will put back with you, and trust to you to find me a hiding-place for another day.”

Guilford was so captivated by a certain frank, chivalrous manner of the stranger, and he seemed to place such unsuspecting confidence in him, that he resolved, even if it should defer his interview with Lady Catharine to another night, to give this night to securing the safety of his new friend. That he was some flying cavalier he was well convinced in his own mind; and he ran over in his memory the names of several of the most distinguished whom he had heard as having been banished, or against whom sentence had been declared, with the probability that this stranger might be one of them.

“ I will go with you, sir,” he answered, “ cheerfully; and if you do not see your vessel, and your head is in danger on land, I think I can manage to run across to the French coast in a fishing-smack to-morrow night.”

“ Parbleu, mon ami! ” exclaimed the captain, with a laugh. “ The land of Monsieur will burn my feet as badly as the land of John Bull. No, no; I am safe only on the deck of my own ship.”

“ Then you have a ship, sir? ”

“Ay, have I, and a better keel cuts not the waters of the channel. It is she that I am waiting for. Now we are clear from the shore again I can breathe more freely. Pull out steadily a mile or so, and then we will look about us.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A STARTLING ADVENTURE.

GUILFORD rowed out from the beach straight into the channel. As they got far enough from the shore to look round on the other side of the rock, they saw the troopers retiring, bearing off the dead bodies of their comrades who had fallen in the pursuit.

“Did you ever kill a man before?” asked the captain, of Guilford, who had drawn his attention to the scene on the shore.

“No, sir.”

“You could hardly do so in a better cause. If you had not shot that fellow, he would have cloven me to the earth. I was never harder beset in my life, and yet I have not always passed my days in a lady’s boudoir.”

“One would not think so, sir, to see you. I dare say you lost your hand in some famous battle?”

The brow of the stranger, naturally black, became suddenly dark as night. He was silent for a few moments, and then answered, in tones that thrilled the very heart’s blood of the young fisherman:—

“No, sir; on the scaffold!”

"On the scaffold!" repeated Guilford, with a start and a look that betrayed his surprise; and in his excitement he ceased rowing, and regarded the stranger with a new and strange interest.

"Do not cease to row, my young friend. I would gain a good sea-berth. Your eyes are sharp. Look, and tell me what you see in the south. I fancied I caught a flash of fire in that quarter, just west of the moon's path."

"So did I, sir. There are three lights burning, one above another. They are small, but I see them distinctly."

"And so do I," answered the captain, springing to his feet, and speaking with animated joy. "That is my boat. It was to row in from the ship, which was to remain in mid-channel, and every ten minutes, as she pulled towards the little port of Blithelmstone, was to display three lanterns upon an oar. By being out here half a league from land I shall save them the trouble of going further in, and you the time—which I know you are generously giving me—from the trysting tree. I know it is unfair to rob a lover of one moment of such heavenly moonlight as this."

"Nay, sir cavalier," answered Guilford, who each moment felt drawn out to like the man whose life he had saved, and to confide in him; "it needs but little light for a lover to take his last adieu of his lady-love."

"What! Is it so? It must be, from thy tones, and the tremor of thy lip. What, a quarrel?"

"No, my lord. Do not ask me more."

"Nay, but thy happiness shall be in my keeping. Thou shalt tell me thy tale on board my ship. It may be I can serve thee where thou little thinkest."

"Thanks, captain; but no one can aid me. It is settled without charge."

"I will judge of that when I have made thee tell me thy love-story. See! there shine the lights again nearer. The rogues are pulling in towards the land, little guessing their master is so near them. If they had been a-land two hours earlier, I should not have been exposed to be hurried away."

fox as I was. Pull a little across the course of the boat, so that we can meet her."

Guilford could now plainly see, not a quarter of a mile off, a black four-oared barge pulling steadily in towards the land. No lights were now visible on board, but every few minutes three round, swinging lanterns had been displayed for a moment and then removed. As the boats drew near each other, the barge was stopped suddenly, and there was distinctly heard the clicking of steel against flint.

"My merry men are regular devils to be on the alert," said the captain. "They would hammer their flints if they saw a pair of gulls sailing near on a rotten spar. They will challenge us, and if we are not quick to give a satisfactory response, they will give us, without strive or shrift, a couple of pounds of harquebus balls in our ribs."

Scarcely had the stranger spoken, than there came sternly across the water the sonorous hail:—

"What boat is there?"

"The prince!" responded the cavalier.

At this the crew of the other boat gave a hearty British huzza; and, the oars falling into the water, the barge came bounding across the intervening space of water like an arrow. The next moment the two boats were side by side and stationary. Guilford had been struck with amazement when he heard the stranger's answer; and believing that it was indeed the prince in person, though he had believed him to be a more youthful-looking man, he sprang forward to kiss his hand and declare his devotion to him even in his exile.

"Nay, my brave friend," said the stranger raising him up, "I am not the prince; but I wish I were, for thy sake and his own, for I fear me he has not the good fortune to be so well out of England as I am. The answer I gave is but the name of my ship, and the sign of my presence to my men. I am glad to meet you again, my trusty hearts!" he now said, turning to the crew; and at the same time he exchanged friendly salutations with a young officer who commanded the barge, and who seemed exceedingly happy to see him.

“ And where is the ship, Edward ? ” he asked of him.

“ To the south-west about four miles.”

“ Are all well on board ? ”

“ All, my lord.”

“ And any news ? You have been late.”

“ We would have been in earlier, but a yacht was hovering about us till night, and kept us from advancing; and at length it became so close a watcher that the count fired a gun and brought her to and captured her. He feared they would run in and report the ship.”

“ He did right. Whose yacht was it ? ”

The answer was spoken in so low a tone that Guilford did not hear it, for the young officer seemed to speak with constraint before him.

“ Ah, do not fear my friend here, Edward. I owe my life to his courage. You must know, I was seated in the village inn, quietly waiting for the night, after having by a miracle got away from London, when all at once the tap-room was filled by as truculent a set of Cromwell’s worthies as you ever chanced to meet with. Well, I had to put a bold face on the matter, and pretended to take no notice of them. I soon found they were despatched to guard the coast, to prevent Prince Charles from getting out of England; for Oliver has sent guards from Land’s End to Newcastle, to keep him within the island; but heaven grant him a safe escape from his toils and a triumph over all his enemies ! ”

“ Amen ! ” said Guilford, in so hearty a tone that the youthful seaman who had been called Edward grasped him by the hand and said, enthusiastically:—

“ Whoever you are, you are my friend, since you pity the prince.”

Guilford returned the pressure with delight, and the captain resumed:—

“ My wits were now set to work to find some way of getting out of the inn without attracting the particular notice of these suspicious Roundheads. But the first movement which I made to rise to settle my bill and leave was observed

by two of them, who came near and said, impertinently and in their sanctimonious whine:—

“‘Brother, thou needest not depart. Thou shalt abide and sup with us and we will drink to the health of the Joshua of the Lord.’

“By this I knew they meant Oliver their master, and I swore internally that I would have my tongue cut out before I would lift a cup to my lips in his honor. So I resolved, before I drew the notice of more of them upon me, that I would bolt at once, and trust to my good fortune; for if they were by chance to discover who I was, I knew my fate was sealed. So, without more ado, I seized a settle, and, swinging it broadly, knocked my two friends to the floor, and clearing my way, I gained the outside of the hostel, and then ran for it. It was some seconds before they fully understood the matter who were outside; but no sooner did the idea take them that I was not running for a wager, but for my head, than they were not backward in making sail after me. Instinctively, I made for the sea-side, where I hoped to see my boat, for it was the hour I looked for her appearance to take me off to my ship. But no boat was to be seen, and I followed the beach at life-speed, followed by my pursuers, who gave race after me like a pack of hounds. I shot two of them as they came after me; but a third, who was mounted, would have cut me down but for this brave fellow, who knocked him out of his saddle with a pistolet shot, and then got me off in his boat, which was close at hand. So you see I had a narrow escape; and if you and my merry men love me, Edward, you will think much of this bold youth, Guilford Graham.”

“We are friends from this hour,” answered the elegant young sailor, whom Guilford thought handsome enough to be a woman, and laying his hand affectionately upon his shoulder.

“We will now pull to the ship,” said the captain; “but, my brave fisherman, wilt thou not go on board with me? I wish to show thee my brave craft, and my true men all, every

soul of whom will be thy friend for what thou hast done to-night. Come, do not hesitate. I will have thee and thy boat put adrift by sunrise, if thou likest, near enough to the coast for thee to row in in half an hour."

"I will go on board if coming nearer the shore of England at dawn will not put thee in peril on my account."

"Not a bit, my good friend; I care not, when I am aboard, how near I run in and snap my finger at Cromwell's clumsy war-ships. Give way, my men; we will take the boat, to which I in part owe my safety, in tow."

Almost in opposition to his own real wishes, Guilford found himself consenting to visit the ship. The captain had fascinated him, and he felt that he should be content to unite his fortunes with his, after he should have taken farewell of Lady Catharine. Indeed, from the first, when the stranger hinted mechanically that he had a ship, a wish was born in Guilford's heart to sail with him, and win a name upon the seas. It was mainly under the impulse of this scarcely-formed idea that he yielded to the invitation of the captain to go on board.

"I will, at least, see for myself," he said within himself, musingly; "and if I find that here is a career open before me for honor and fame, I will embrace it, if this brave captain will take me into his service."

In half an hour after he had consented to be taken on board the ship, she was seen looming up about a mile distant, darkly and indistinct, like a huge floating castle with gray towers. A single blue light was placed over the quarter, as a guide to the boat, in order that it might not mistake another vessel for it.

"She is a very large vessel, sir," remarked Guilford, as she grew larger and larger on the vision of his eye as they approached the place where she majestically rose and fell upon the long swells of the quiet and glassy sea.

"Yes; we have not less than three hundred men on board, and some thirty cannons at her sides, besides two swivels in each top."

"It must be a very fine thing to command so brave a ship as that, sir captain?"

"That is as a person's ambition may measure. Some particular friends of mine, young man, would hardly be content with less than a channel fleet."

"I am sure I should consider my fortune made for life, sir, to command a single ship half the size of this. How grandly she towers upward, like Castle Vane seen from the beach!"

"Castle Vane?—that is Lord Charles Vane's residence, and is near where we embarked?"

"The very castle, sir, that is on the cliff."

"So I supposed. Is Lord Vane at home, canst say?"

"The young lord, sir captain."

"Ay—is he? A young man that I do not much fancy."

"Nor I, my lord," answered Guilford, speaking, without reflection, from the feeling of the moment.

"Ha! Has he crossed thy path, then, young man?"

"I like him not well, my lord."

"Common report hath it that he hath a fair sister. Hast thou, living so near, by chance seen her? If so, canst thou bear witness to her comeliness?"

"She is very fair, my lord captain."

"Thou hast seen her, then?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Guilford, blushing, and both pleased and annoyed at having Lady Catharine the subject of conversation. To him she was something consecrated to his most secret thoughts, and the idea of whom he could share with no one.

"She will be one of the proudest peeresses in the realm if the young king comes to the throne. Many a knight and noble, and I wot princes too, will be suing for her hand. But here we are, discovered and hailed."

Guilford's heart was swelling. Hope was dying in him at these last words of the captain. He felt that he was mad longer to think of her. He now saw more vividly than ever his rashness and folly.

CHAPTER IX.

A THRILLING SCENE.

JUDGING from the captain's reception on board his ship, Guilford entertained the highest notions of his authority and popularity. The scene which the long war-like decks presented to his eyes, lighted up by rows of battle lanterns, was novel and stirring to the blood. Three hundred men were arranged in orderly ranks to welcome their returned chief, and the red glare of the lanterns falling upon their features, lent to their countenances and picturesque costumes a romantic character that did not fail to impress the lively imagination of young Guilford. There were at least a dozen officers also assembled on the quarter-deck, some of them with gray beards, others young and ardent. They were each and all handsomely attired in gold-laced coats and rich chapeaux with plumes. The whole appearance of the ship, with its tiers of cannon, its crowds of fighting men, armed with long pistolets and cutlasses, and its chivalrous-looking group of officers, who all seemed gentlemen born, struck Guilford in the most favorable manner.

While he was casting his eyes about him, and filling them with the new scenes thus suddenly opened before him, the captain, who was plainly dressed and in travel-worn costume, placed his hand on his shoulder and said to his officers:—

“Messieurs, to this young fisherman I owe my life. I was hotly pursued to the coast by a score of Cromwell's hounds, and this young man shot down the leading trooper and got me safely off in his boat. This is enough for me to say to place him on the proper footing with you all.”

At this several of the officers advanced and shook Guilford by the hand, and especially the young men were enthusiastic

in their congratulations. Guilford's feelings may be guessed at, but hardly described. His heart bounded with joy, for he felt that through this fair reception might be opened a way for his advancement.

The captain now descended, or rather walked aft into his state-cabin, which was an elaborately carved house, built over the stern of the after twenty feet of the deck; for, like the ships of that period, the stern rose very loftily, so that a person standing on the top of the poop had his head very nearly on a level with the mizzen top.

At the invitation of the captain, Guilford followed him into the first apartment—for there was a room within a room. Before the door of the farthest state-room stood a sentry.

“What, how is this?” he asked of his first lieutenant, seeing the soldier.

“My lord, here are the written reports of all that has transpired since we landed you three weeks ago, at Hastings, to go to London,” said that officer, handing him a book. “You will find in it that last night we brought to a yacht, and have detained the parties, one of whom is a lady, and at the present time occupies the inner state-room.”

“Yes, yes, Edward said something to me about it,” answered the captain; “but as I am now on board, there can be no harm in letting them depart. Where is the yacht?”

“It is alongside, my lord.”

“How many persons did it contain?”

“Seven—a gentleman and young lady, one passenger, and a crew of four men.”

“Bring the gentleman before me.”

“My lord, shall I leave?” asked Guilford, who saw that this was to be a private interview.

“No; remain where you are, my friend. I want to talk with you by and by.”

The next moment the lieutenant returned, conducting the Lord Rudolph Vane into the state-cabin. His face was pale, and his eye had a tremulous light of fear in it. Guilford instantly recognized him, but not caring to be recognized in

return, he withdrew into the shadow of one of the gilded columns that supported the deck overhead. But the eyes of Lord Rudolph were fixed only on the dark, noble, commanding face and form of the captain.

"I am sorry, sir, that my officer, in my absence, was under the necessity of detaining you. You are at liberty to depart at any moment. May I know whom I have the honor of entertaining as my guest?"

"Lord Rudolph Vane, of Castle Vane," answered the young man, haughtily; for, finding that no danger was to be apprehended, his native insolence and audacity returned.

"Ah, my lord, indeed! I have heard of you," said the captain, with a darkening brow; "and what I have heard gives your honor not over much credit."

"Do you insult me, sir?" demanded Rudolph, fiercely.

"Be calm, my lord. Your ire here will do you no good. You are in my hands, and if you knew who I am, you would expect the next moment to hear me give the order to have you hanged at my fore-yard-arm."

Lord Rudolph shuddered. His face became as pale as marble.

"Who—who are you? What have you against me? You dare not harm me."

"No man dares *me*, Lord Vane. Last night, without knowing who you were, my officer in charge, seeing you hover about the ship like a spy, as no doubt you were, captured you. My first order, before hearing your name, was for your release, for anything you can now report on land can do us no harm; for ere twelve hours, we shall be sailing many leagues from here. But since I learn who you are, I will show you that I am too far above you to crush such a reptile. Deeply as you have wronged me, base as you are, recreant as you have proved to your oath as a noble, you are too far beneath my contempt to come within the notice of my vengeance."

"Who are you?" demanded Rudolph, with his eyes red with rage and alarm.



“I am the Earl of Villiers,” answered the captain, in a voice of thunder.

Instantly Lord Rudolph sank upon his knees, like a man who has been smitten down by some irresistible stroke, his face white with fear and his lips trembling.

“Well may you tremble, caitiff! Ay, I am that nobleman—that friend of the king, who by your treachery was brought to the scaffold, and lost my right hand! Look ye!” And the captain held up before the eyes of the terror-stricken young lord the stump of his wrist. “Under mask of courting my daughter, Lady Jane, you wormed yourself into a loyal noble’s house, crept like a serpent into the sacred circle of my domestic hearth, crouched like a toad in the corner of my library and council-rooms till you learned that I was leader of a conspiracy to bring Cromwell’s head to the block. Then, charged with the news, thou didst mock my daughter’s love and leave her, and pour into the protector’s ear all thy treacherous intelligence. For this thou wert rewarded with my fair estate as the hire for thy villainy, and I and mine exchanged our sweet home for a prison. But thanks to thy sister, who, when she heard all that thou hadst done, and for love of my daughter, with whom she studied her books at common tutelage, my hand and not my head satisfied the usurper, and I, with my child, was exiled beyond the sea. Well mayest thou crouch and moan. There is no man on the round earth into whose hands you should not so much fear to fall as into mine.”

The wretch remained upon his knees, looking the very picture of fear and abjectness. The dread of the death which he felt he richly merited was stamped upon his clammy brow. His lips moved, as if trying to form words to ask for mercy, yet no sound came from them, as if he felt that all petitions would be in vain.

“What hast thou to answer for thyself, thou false and traitorous noble? Shall I not hang thee?”

“For my sister’s sake!” he gasped, as if he had caught a faint ray of hope.

“Thy sister! Ah, yes; for her sake I would do much, for I owe to her tears and eloquence with the stern, flinty Cromwell my head. What of her?”

“She is here! Let her speak for me.”

“By the rood, she may speak for thy life and gain it; but thou shalt lose thy right hand this night, as surely as there is justice on earth.”

“Mercy, mercy, my lord!”

“Ho there! Lieutenant St. Clair! Call the men together to execution.”

“Oh, you are not going to kill me!”

“If thy sister pleads not for thy life, it is not worth a marvaredi to thee; but thy right hand shall be cut off. I have sworn it.”

With a shriek, the craven noble fell down in a swoon his full length upon the floor.

A voice from the inner cabin was now heard in earnest implorations. Guilford, who had already divined that Lady Catharine was the female who had been captured with the yacht, now recognized the tones, and he darted impulsively towards the door; but the sentry presented his cutlass, and held him back. He then advanced towards the earl, and said with much excitement:—

“It is the Lady Catharine Vane, my lord; it is his sister.”

“I will at once speak with her,” he answered, and approached the door, which he unlocked. The maiden stood before it, with her toilet considerably disheveled, her rich hair freely floating upon her shoulders, and her beauty increased by the excitement of her feelings.

“Lady Catharine Vane, I am not your jailer, but your debtor,” said the earl, courteously.

“Why are we detained prisoners? What is this I have overheard about the execution of my brother?” she asked, earnestly.

“Lord Rudolph is not to be executed if you ask his life; but he is nevertheless doomed to a punishment that no mediation can save him from. In me, lady, you behold

Lord Villiers. This name is enough to show you what I owe to your generous interposition, and what I owe to your brother. Here let me thank you, both for my daughter and for myself, for the life which you were instrumental in saving from the block."

"Then spare my brother! Oh, he is already dead!" she exclaimed, on discovering him upon the cabin floor, about being raised up and revived by some attendants.

"Nay, it's only a swoon."

"Oh, spare his life, my noble lord!"

"I will do so, for your sake; and he shall understand that to you alone he owes it."

At this moment, in looking around her, her eyes fell on Guilford, who was standing near, reserved and diffident, listening to what was said. She no sooner beheld him than she seemed to forget everything else, everybody about her; for, running towards him, she caught him by both hands, and exclaimed, with the artless delight of a child which amid strangers suddenly discovers a familiar face:—

"You here, Guilford? Heaven be praised!"

The earl, who saw the act, and observed the expression of pure delight and frankness upon her beautiful face, was not a little surprised; and when he saw this pleasure reflected from the handsome features of the young fisherman, he was not a little perplexed.

"Do not fear, Lady Kate. You are safe, and in the hands of a noble gentleman," said Guilford, encouragingly.

"I hope you are not here a prisoner—that you are not in any danger?"

"Be assured, Lady Catharine," said the earl, smiling, "that there is not at this moment a more honored person in this ship than this young man, who, I am pleased to see, is also known to you. To him I owe my life. He brought me off to my ship in his boat, and without his gallant aid I should now no longer be alive."

"Plead for me, Catharine!" suddenly called out the young noble, who had been brought to his senses.

"She has done so successfully, my lord," answered the earl, coldly. "She has gained thy life for thee."

"But my hand! You will not cut off my hand?"

"Were an angel to descend from the blue skies and ask me to spare thy hand, I would not do it. It is need and ripe justice that thou shouldst not go unpunished."

"My lord, mercy for my brother!"

"Lady," said the earl, taking the beautiful maiden by the hand and leading her gently into the rear state-room, "do not pain me by compelling me to deny what I cannot grant. Believe me, this is not vengeance, but duty. It is justice that Lord Rudolph should be compelled to suffer what he has been instrumental in inflicting upon me."

"Oh, my lord, leave vengeance to him to whom it belongeth."

"It is not vengeance, it is punishment. Remain here. Do not leave until I return to you," he said, kindly but firmly. "But for thy presence here, I should have hanged him to the yard-arm—not from personal hatred, but because he is so sleepless a foe to the prince. He even condescends to play the spy in the channel in his own person. The lesson he must have. I will return to you in a few moments."

CHAPTER X.

LORD RUDOLPH'S PUNISHMENT.

THE Lady Kate sat upon the ottoman where he had left her, with her hands pressed to her eyes and her face buried in the cushions. She saw that the earl was inexorable; and although her brother had never been otherwise than hostile towards her ever since she had pleaded so successfully for the Earl of Villiers, yet she could not forget that he *was* her brother; and although he deserved nothing at her hands, yet she felt that she ought to use all her influence to free him from the disgraceful maiming to which he was about to be subjected.

"But I can do no more," she said. "His fate is sealed. I saw that by the earl's eye as he left me. Ah, poor, erring Rudolph! Thou canst blame only thyself! Horrid! that rolling drum must be the signal for the execution of the inflexible earl's command!"

When the earl returned from the state-room where he had left the tearful maiden, he found Lord Rudolph, who had recognized Guilford, and with surprise seen that he was regarded with favor, pleading with the young fisherman to intercede for him.

"You are not a prisoner. I know you can forgive me, for you are naturally generous, I have heard my sister say. Speak a word for me. I cannot endure the loss of my hand! For my sister's sake, do plead for me!"

"I have no power, my lord," answered Guilford, who could not conceal his contempt for his cowardly conduct at a time when a truly brave spirit would meet its fate with proud indifference. But there was nothing truly great about Lord Rudolph. He could be haughty and cruel in possession

of power, but in suffering he showed in its true colors all the weakness and insignificance of his character.

"Will no one intercede for me?" he cried in despair, seeing Guilford turn away, for he well knew that if Lady Kate could not prevail, no word he could utter would be regarded.

"Is it all ready?" quietly demanded the earl of the officer who had superintended the preparations for the execution of the sentence.

"All ready, my lord," answered the officer.

"Conduct Lord Vane to the deck, unless he will walk of himself."

"Is there no mercy with thee?" screamed the young nobleman.

"Thou mightest as well talk to the axe that is to sever thy hand. Proceed with him, as he is disposed to linger. Nay, do not handle him roughly, for he is of noble birth."

The young lord was then led to the deck. He was borne along rather than went by his own will. The scene was terribly imposing. In the centre of the ship, just abaft the capstan, was placed a block. By it stood four men. One of them held a glittering battle-axe in his hand; another a brazen basin; the third and fourth lanterns. A little in the advance stood the surgeon of the ship, with his instruments and bandages, added to which was a seething hot iron, for stopping the flow of the blood. The crew stood around, seven and eight deep, their bearded faces lighted up by the lanterns that hung in the rigging. Farther aft were the officers, with their swords in their hands.

When Lord Rudolph gazed on this scene, so well calculated to appal his nerves, he gave utterance to an audible groan.

"Take him in hand, executioner," said the earl, "and at the stroke of the ship's bell, do your duty. This man," added the earl, looking about him, "is to undergo a just punishment. By his information I was condemned to the scaffold; but through the intercession of a noble maiden,

Cromwell was content with my hand. I have decreed that this young lord shall share the punishment which his master inflicted upon me."

At this there was a general murmur of approbation, and the interest deepened. Lord Rudolph, being led up to the block, was told to take off his coat. But not obeying, it was removed by another, and his arm was then stretched out and bound firmly, in spite of his struggles and shrieks, to the block. The executioner's axe descended upon the wrist, and while a thrilling shriek from the victim rent their ears, the bleeding hand was caught in the brazen basin. The surgeon instantly proceeded to perform his duty, and staunch the blood, while the stern earl, turning away from the spot, reentered the state-room.

"This act of justice done, I am more content to be branded as Red Hand, as men catching up Cromwell's epithet have called me, far and wide. But the protector shall feel that if one of my hands is baptized in the blood of the scaffold, the other hath power enough in its strong nerve to shake his usurped throne!"

The earl walked up and down his cabin three or four times, under much excitement, which the recent occurrence had naturally awakened in his bosom. He then looked around, as if he were seeking for some one.

"What, ho! where is young Graham?" he asked of the sentry who stood by the half-open door which led into the inner apartment.

"He passed in, my lord, urging that he must speak with the lady; and as you had left the door open, I did not consider that she was to be regarded as a prisoner."

"Very well; you are released from duty."

The man retired and the earl advanced to the door which was ajar. He opened it and was about to enter, when he arrested himself on the threshold at what he beheld. Kneeling at the feet of the weeping girl was the young fisherman, his hand clasping hers, and his face near hers, and expressive of the tenderest and most respectful sympathy.

"It is over now, Lady Kate; tears are of no avail. If it would have pleased thee, I would gladly have taken his place, though thou knowest I have little reason to love him. But all who are related to thee are near to me, for thy sake. Let us be content that his life is spared, for it was the captain's certain purpose to have hanged him, but for thee."

"I cannot blame—I cannot reproach. Rudolph must feel the justice of his fate," she said, with sudden resolution. "But how camest thou on board this terrible vessel?"

"I came to bring off the captain, who, being on shore, was set upon and nearly slain by Cromwell's troopers; and although I was on my way, dearest Lady Kate, to the castle to see thee, I turned aside for his safety, and came hither, little expecting to find thee on board as I have done."

"My brother, when he had taken me from your fishing-boat—how I chanced to be in which I explained to him—instead of going to land, hovered in the channel till night, and then began to watch this vessel, which he was expecting for four nights, waiting to intercept the captain from the land when he should come on board, as I heard him say to the young man with him, who is one of Cromwell's agents. Do you know who the captain is?" she asked pointedly and in an undertone.

"The Earl Villiers."

"Yes, but are you aware that this ship is that of the far-famed Red Hand?"

"Of Red Hand, the buccaneer?" exclaimed Guilford, starting to his feet with surprise.

"Earl Villiers and Red Hand, of whom I have heard you name the bold exploits, are one and the same person."

"Can this be possible? Are you in the power of this terrible man?"

"You mistake him. It is the common people, the Round-heads, who call him a pirate. He is no buccaneer, Guilford, but an exiled noble, who has united with himself many brave spirits like his own, who in this ship, hover about England, seeking to do all the injury to the usurper's cause

that lies in their power, and to have ever ready for the prince an armed ship to take him over the sea when he is driven to the last foothold on his rightful kingdom. There is not a truer noble breathes in England than Lord Villiers, known as Red Hand. I can forgive him his punishment of Rudolph, for my brother has cruelly caused all his woe."

"And is this Red Hand's ship? Is that captain whose life I saved on shore, the daring channel cruiser who has defied and beaten off four of the protector's ships? Is this the man that I regarded as the hero of romance, and whose exploits were the wonder of my curiosity? I am glad you have corrected my error with regard to him, Lady Kate. But is he called Red Hand the Rover often?"

"Yes, the Covenanters, who fear him, would frighten their children with his name as with a goblin's. But I know that he is a true and loyal Englishman, and one of the staunchest friends of the crown; and that he does more to keep alive the flame of loyalty by his active and sleepless courage than any of the exiled lords. He alone, as it were, wages war against Cromwell, who has offered vast sums for his capture. All this I have learned from my father, who has the highest regard for him, and who has shed many a bitter tear that he should have had a son who could inflict such injury upon him. Confide in him, Guilford, and he will be your friend."

"Catharine," said Guilford, in a changed and formal tone, while Lord Villiers, who at each moment was tempted to enter, but was yet restrained, saw that his face grew pale and his lips colorless. She looked up into his face with a stare of surprise at this unusual mode of addressing her.

"What is it, Guilford?" she asked artlessly.

"I told you that last night, when I was so fortunate as to offer assistance to Lord Villiers, I was on my way to the castle. It was in order to see you and have a last interview with you. It was to take leave of you forever."

"Take leave of me forever, Guilford? Where are you going? or what have I done?" she asked with surprise.

"Nothing. Where I am going, I know not. But one thing it is proper for me to do, and that is to break off a friendship which will only continue to embarrass you, when you reflect upon your own position and my low station. Perhaps, as younger, it was allowable, as you condescended to suffer it; but, Lady Catharine, I cannot expect you, in womanhood, to abide by the friendship of girlhood. Here let me say farewell; for I may have no other opportunity. May you one day be united with one worthy of you in rank and virtue, and I will always pray for your happiness."

With these words he knelt, pressed her hand to his lips, and was retiring precipitately, when he found himself face to face with the earl.

"My young friend, do not be so hasty. I have heard and understand it all. You have acted nobly. Your own heart is breaking as a sacrifice to what you believe to be a duty. Lady Catharine, you look puzzled and distressed. May I ask you one plain question?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Are you attached to this brave young man?"

"We have long been friends, my lord."

"Have you any wish to terminate the friendship?"

"Indeed, I was never more surprised. When"—

"It is because you do not clearly understand him. He feels, and properly, that you and he can never be united as if you had both been noble; and being fully alive to the difficulties that must interpose to bar such a union, he nobly sacrifices himself."

"He then does not understand me, my lord. I have taken into thought the differences of our rank. I trust, Guilford, you will think of this no more."

"You are too kind and generous, Lady Catharine," said Guilford, casting himself at her feet. "But I must win a name, to make myself worthy of you. If you waive all rank, I shall try and achieve, instead, merit. It shall be my ambition to make myself worthy of you, and make the world respect him whom Lady Catharine Vane thus honors."

CHAPTER XI.

THE RETURN TO CASTLE VANE.

THE interview with which the last chapter closed having thus happily terminated the earl, after complimenting Guilford on his spirit, proposed to him, if nothing better offered, to take service with him in his ship.

“We shall not always be wanderers over the sea, my friend,” he said; “the prince will one day gain his throne, and then we shall be at the top. As for Lady Catharine’s heart, you may be sure it is in the right place; and I have a higher regard for you than before, since I find you possess qualities to win the attachment of so lovely a lady, who, in the brightness of your character, can discover no obscurity of birth. Now I have one favor to ask of you,” added the earl, “and that is, that you will take command of the yacht and convey Lord Rudolph and his fair sister safely back to Castle Vane. He will, of course, be something of an invalid, and must be well cared for. The person who was taken with him in the yacht, is a spy of Cromwell’s and I shall take care of him here. If at any time you wish to join my fortunes, you will hear of me if you will run over in your boat to the French coast, and land on the island of Alderney, off Cape de la Hague. At that little port there is an inn, painted red. The landlord always knows my term of absence when I am away; and any line left there for me will be faithfully given into my possession when I put in there.”

Guilford thanked the earl, and answered that he thought he should very soon be compelled to take him at his word.

“Thou shalt be welcome; and although I can do but little for thee under my present fortunes, some day, when I rise you will rise with me.”

“But, my noble earl, I fear,” said Guilford, sadly, “that I shall hardly ever rise so high as to be able to offer the Lady Catharine a hand that would not be despised by her proud house.”

“Courage, my brave youth. In these toppling times they who are at the bottom of the ladder to-day, to-morrow may stand on the top round. With a face, figure, health and courage like yours, and above all, with such a prize to win, you have nothing to fear.”

This conversation took place in the outer cabin. The officer of the deck now entered and reported that the yacht was alongside and her crew on board, and all was ready for her departure.

“That is as it should be. Now, my young friend, you must convey Lord Rudolph and the maiden to Castle Vane. Go on board, and Lady Catharine shall be escorted by me into the yacht.”

Guilford then took a grateful leave of the formidable Red Hand, in whose dread presence he could scarcely realize himself to have been, and descended into the yacht. The moonlight shone brightly upon its low deck, on which, stretched upon a cot, he saw the prostrate form of Lord Rudolph, looking ghastly pale in the face. He advanced towards him, and said:—

“I hope, my lord, you do not suffer a great deal of pain?”

“Pain! I endure infernal torments. Who are you? I see now. What do you want in my yacht?”

“I am ordered by Lord Villiers to take charge of it and see you safely to Castle Vane, as he can spare none of his men.”

“Where is Tennett?”

“Who, my lord?”

“The gentleman who came with me.”

“I heard the earl say that as he was a spy of Cromwell’s, he should put him in irons. My lord, I have no desire to undertake this duty, but it is the earl’s command. I am

truly sorry for your misfortune, and will see you to Castle Vane with all tenderness."

"And Lady Kate?"

The answer to this interrogation was prevented by the appearance of Red Hand, conducting the noble girl to the yacht. Guilford sprang forward to receive her and lead her to a seat in the stern; but she stopped short of it, and bent over her brother with affectionate solicitude.

"Now, my noble young friend," said Lord Villiers, "I need not tell you what a valuable freight I entrust to your charge. Farewell; and remember," he added, in an undertone, "Alderney Isle and the inn, if you have need of my poor services. And for you, Lord Rudolph, I wish you a better heart and more true nobility. I have given you a daily remembrance of me, so I will not ask you to bear me in mind. Adieu, fair Lady Catharine; what I have witnessed and learned of the true nobility of your character to-night, has caused me to respect you as one of the rarest jewels among women. You have not," he added to her ear, "lightly bestowed your heart. Believe me, this brave youth will yet cause his name to fill a brilliant page in England's history."

"I feel it, my lord. He is all that is good and noble and true."

"Love and cherish him, for women do not always find men to love. I hope one of these days to hear of your happiness. Farewell; it is but two leagues to your father's castle. Commend me to him; but do not from me excuse my punishment of his son, for I have performed but a stern and painful duty."

"I know it, my lord," she answered sadly.

He pressed her hand to his lips, and left the deck of the yacht for his own lofty ship.

The next moment the little vessel was cast off from the huge side of the channel cruiser, and taking the helm, Guilford gave orders to the crew to trim the sails, and with a light but favorable breeze, he lay the course of the yacht for

the main. The ship at the same time squared her enormous yards, and her head swinging round westward, she steered on that tack till Guilford could see her no longer. The yacht, in the meanwhile, bounded lightly along on her landward tack, and clearer and higher the cliff with its castle rose before him. The lights of the little village at its base appeared one after the other; and from one of the towers one light, brighter than the rest, shone like the lantern of a Pharos.

"That is my father's room, Guilford," said Lady Kate, seeing that he was regarding it. "Doubtless he is seated there at his books, for he has the name of being a great scholar, thou hast heard."

"Perhaps it is to guide thee back."

"Nay, he or no one is aware that I have been on the sea the last twelve hours. You recollect, Guilford, that my getting into your boat was only a whim of the moment; and after my brother so strangely took possession of me, I had no chance of return. Perhaps my father supposes that I am in my room; for I am so much accustomed to rove about for hours, that unless I am particularly wanted, it is not known whether I am in the castle or abroad."

"I hope you will not have been missed."

"Catharine," said Lord Rudolph, in a querulous voice.

"What, brother Rudolph?" she answered, hastening to his side. "You have slept well?"

"I wish to exact an oath from you. I see we are near the castle. Swear to me, by your hopes of heaven, that you will never reveal to my father nor any other living being the disgrace I have to-night suffered!"

"I will not reveal it, brother, if you desire the secret to be kept."

"Desire it to be kept! It must be kept a close secret! If you do not blab it, and this fishing friend of yours can be forced to be secret, I will manage to hide from my friends the loss of my hand. I could never endure the scornful laugh, the consciousness of a mutilation so degrading."

"But it must be known, brother."

"It is known only to the crew of this infernal pirate, not one of whom will ever dare land in England. If you keep the secret, and this fellow can be made to do it"—

"Guilford Graham is a man who can be trusted, brother," she said with some earnestness.

"So you think. He has fascinated you, girl, by some vile spell. Call him to me. Nay, I will not speak to him, but will leave it to you to exact silence from him."

"I will promise it for him. But you forget the four men, your crew."

"They are minions of my will. Go and see what this Graham answers."

In a frame of mind far from welcome, Lord Rudolph lay upon his couch; for his pride struggling with a fierce sentiment of hatred and craven fear, and mingling with some little degree of remorse, kept up a fearful tempest of passion in his soul. Lady Catharine left him, on her message to Guilford, a prey to emotions of perfect torture. However, by an effort stronger than was his wont, he checked their sway, and awaited, coolly as he might, the answer of Guilford.

"He says he has no desire to report it," she answered, after going to the helm where Guilford stood, steering the vessel in towards the foot of the cliff.

"I shall take care to keep it myself," he muttered, smiling, as if he heard her words with evident satisfaction.

The yacht now drew nearer the land, and was soon within the black shadow cast by the tall cliff. A few minutes afterwards she came to the stone pier, where the boats of the castle were usually moored. Here Guilford brought the yacht skillfully to alongside the landing steps. The men obeyed his orders in furling the canvass and making her fast; and then taking the cot upon which the young lord was lying, they proceeded to bear him ashore, and convey him up the steep path to the castle. Guilford gave his whole attention to the comfort of the invalid, taking care that the

men moved steadily and cautiously, while Lady Kate went on before. At length they reached the gate of the castle, where after delivering his charge to the warder, to whom Lord Rudolph said he had been wounded in a duello, he left to return to his own home. But he had not advanced ten steps from the portcullis, ere he was detained by the voice of Lady Kate close at his side.

"Why, Guilford, you do not well to take your leave so quickly—or rather no leave at all. You have not given me time to thank you."

"I did but fear to irritate your brother more if he saw me take leave of thee," he answered, pressing to his lips the hand she placed confidently in his.

"You are too guarded, Guilford. You know not how proud I have been of you this day and night past. I cannot return without expressing my sense of your noble delicacy. I appreciate and understand it all. From this time we know each other, and you will not mistrust me."

"Mistrust thee, Lady Kate?"

"Nay, that is not the word exactly. But you will not doubt my regard for you?"

"I cannot; you are too kind, when you know, as I now do fully, how far beneath you I am."

"Love knows no rank. You are worthy of me, or I should never have loved or cared for you. How like you Red Hand?"

"And that noble gentleman and right-hearted patriot was the famous sea king I have heard so much of. How difficult it is for me to realize that in the Earl Villiers I saw that celebrated captain."

"Do you not like him?"

"It seems to me I could die for him."

"So do all men who know him, my father says—and he is not the least of his friends. But how shall I forgive him his act of to-night?"

"It was terrible retribution, Lady Kate; but was it not deserved?"

“I cannot deny it. My brother has deeply wronged him; and perhaps it is just he himself should endure something of the suffering he has inflicted upon him. It was a mercy that he spared his life. Now, my noble friend, since we must part, tell me frankly where you are to go—what course you have marked out for yourself, so that one day you may come back and ask my hand of my father; for, as thou hast said, thou must achieve something to please him and give thee honor. I will wait thy time, true to thee, even to death, so that thou comest not in life to claim me as thine.”

This was spoken with all the truthfulness and sweet confidence of a woman who loves with all her heart.

“I have hardly formed a plan, dear Lady Kate. I will by to-morrow decide. But my mind is so full of the Earl of the Red Hand, that I shall probably decide by going to offer him my services.”

“That would please me, Guilford. He thinks much of you. Though he is now but the head of a small company, and commands but a single ship, under good King Charles the First he was lord high admiral, and ruled navies by his nod.”

“I will follow his fortunes.”

“Thou wilt not be led astray? The times are ripening, my father says, for the throne to have its own again. The land is weary of the protectorate and its tyranny. Prince Charles has been defeated, it is true, and is now a fugitive, either in Scotland or England, at this moment; but if he escape over the sea, he will then be the rallying point for armies of tens of thousands.”

“It was rumored yesterday,” said Guilford, “that the prince had been seen in Warwick in the disguise of a pack-man, traveling south. It was also reported that one who had known him perfectly, saw the same pack-man in Berkshire two days afterwards.”

“We heard of this; and doubtless the reports are true, and the prince is making his way to the south of England, hoping to find a passage across to France.”

“Heaven grant that he may reach France in safety, and foil all his foes,” said Guilford, with warmth. “But Cromwell is so vigilant, his emissaries are so numerous, his spies so vigilant, that every person who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself, will be placed under arrest.”

The lovers had now reached the point in the path down the cliff where it became precipitous. Here they stopped, and Lady Kate, taking Guilford by the hand, looked him earnestly in the eyes and said:—

“You are going to seek your fortune and win a name. But remember, I do not ask either from you, but they are your own voluntary wish; and never forget that, if after all, you should return unfortunate, and without the success you hope for, you will be received by me with the same affection with which I now part from you.”

The lovers now took leave of each other, and Guilford hastened down the precipitous path without trusting his eyes to look back and take another look of the fair form which he knew was lingering to gaze after him.

CHAPTER XII.

SURPRISING INTELLIGENCE TO GUILFORD.

THE way by which he now left the castle was not that which descended to the beach, where the boats usually were, but a path that led northward down the hill towards the country-side, and which conducted persons who left the castle for the interior, to the main road a mile off. Upon reaching the deep glen at the foot of the eminence, Guilford struck into a broader cartway that went in the direction of the village. He walked onward, lost in his own thought, and thinking upon the chance of the future. He had emerged from the little dale, and had the village roofs in sight, when the voices of singing and bacchanalian carousing reached his ears. He stopped, surprised at what he heard, and then hastened forward to ascertain the cause of such unusual sounds. He had gone but a few steps further, however, when he saw a man seated by the roadside, groaning in a most pitiable way. He approached him, and recognized Digby, the well-known village busybody and gossip.

“Up, man, up! What aileth thee, Digby?”

“What, is it thee, Master Guilford?” asked the man, starting to his feet, and hugging the young fisherman with great delight. “I am glad to see thee!”

“What hath happened? The clothes are torn half off thy back, and thou hast blood on thy cheek.”

“Marry have I? Blood shed for the prince. You must know that I did but fill a cup in the inn yonder to the Prince Charles, when these Cromwell troopers set upon me, and would have slain me outright but for Dame Bess, the hostess, who took my part, and told them roundly I was but a poor innocent, and meant nobody no harm.”

“What have Cromwell’s troopers to do in the inn?”

“Cromwell’s troopers? What, hast thou not heard the news? This is a God-send, then, if thou hast not heard what I supposed every man, woman and child in the village had heard. Why, if there is one trooping Roundhead in the port, there are two hundred and fifty of the shaven-crowned, psalm-singing rogues.”

“What are they doing here? When did they come?” asked Guilford, with surprise; for having left the village just before their arrival the evening before, he knew nothing of the object of this new invasion of the Covenanters, though that a party of them were in the town he was aware, from their chase of the captain. But he was ignorant of the particulars.

“They came galloping in about sundown, and what could not find quarters at the inn, dispersed over the hamlet, till there is not a house that has not a brace of them to kiss the lasses and eat out the larders. As for what they ha’ come for, it is to keep watch that Prince Charles don’t find ship-ping at our little fishing town and get safe over to France.”

“This is news, indeed, for our quiet town, Digby. I knew some had been here, but supposed they had left. Dost thou know whether there are any of these Roundhead rogues at our cabin?”

“Marry come up, I verily believe that the two most truculent fiends among ’em, the two Goliaths of Gath, are making themselves at home there.”

“Then I ought to be there at once,” said the young man, hurrying forward.

“But, be discreet. I would advise thee entreat them civilly.”

“I shall be discreet, you may rest assured. I shall take care not to propose Prince Charles’s health to a brace of Covenanters,” he added, laughing.

“Nay, take me with thee. Let me keep under the protection of thy valiancy, good Master Guilford. When I got my head broke, I went to thy house first, but the good dame

told me thou hadst taken the way to the castle last; and although after midnight I came this way to wait for thy coming, and I will not leave thy back while a Roundhead varlet hath footing in the town. There is nothing like courage to defend a man against dangers; and if a man have it not himself, he must seek it elsewhere; and marry, I know thou hast enough for thee and me. Hark! hear the arrant hypocrites sing their long-winded Old Testament verses. There was one chap of them who had a beard like a lion, who did nothing but sing over a chapter of proper names, as 'Moses begat Boaz;' and by the way he rolled his eyes up, one would have fancied he got great grace from the employment."

Digby went on talking after this fashion, until they came to a lane turning towards the water from the main street, on which the hamlet was built. At the foot of this lane stood his own cottage. At the corner of it he was challenged by a trooper mounted on a black horse.

"Who goes there?"

"A fisherman."

"Advance and let me see if thou smellest fishy," answered the man, in a coarse manner.

Guilford approached him, and taking off his bonnet, boldly showed him his face.

"Where dost thou live?"

"There," he answered, pointing at his house.

"And what art thou doing abroad so late, for it is well to two o'clock in the morning?"

"I have been a-trysting."

"So I guess; but, young man, beware of the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, and the allurements of Sathanas. And who is that with thee?"

"A poor wretch whom I take to fish with me at times."

"Let me look at thee closer, thou poor wretch, for a king's eye might hide itself under the shadow of a beggar's cowl."

With this the trooper extended the point of his long sword, and catching the cap of Digby upon its end, raised it into

the air. He then made him approach close to his stirrup, and looked keenly into his round, pug-nosed, bloated visage.

"By the beard of Herod, thou art the prince of ale-pots and must have too much dread of water to think of crossing it. Thou wilt never cross over to France and drink sour wine while thou canst grow lusty on good ale in England. What is thy name, Sir Rubicund?"

"Digby—David Digby, your highness," answered the gossip, with humility.

"Thou shouldst be called Balaam," replied the trooper, who, at this moment seeing another person running down the street, left Digby and spurred towards him.

"By my head, this fellow would as lief eat me unsodden, as he would a hare, Master Guilford. Didst mark his teeth?"

Guilford, however, had taken the opportunity to walk on towards the gate of his house, and he was about opening it, when he perceived two persons seated within it upon a little wooden settle, which, of an evening, was a common family resort.

"It is Guilford!" exclaimed one of the persons, springing up at seeing him.

"What, Anne? Up so late? It is very near morning."

"I know it, cousin, but—but—one could not sleep with two soldiers within; and besides, they have my bed; and moreover, Aunt Betsy bade me wait without and watch for your return."

"Guilford, you do not know me here in the shadow?"

"What, Robin? Is it you?"

"I have been keeping thy cousin Anne company, waiting for thee. I would not leave her and your mother alone during your absence, with two troopers in the house."

"You are very kind, Robin. I know not how to thank you. But," he added, smiling, "I suppose you have not been without your sweet reward, from what I saw when I interrupted you."

Robin colored, and Anne held down her head, both vexed and embarrassed.

"Not the least sign of jealousy does he show," she said to herself. "He does not care for me, nor love me as Robin does. I will never let him know I have loved him, since he is so cool and indifferent about it."

"Where are these men, Robin?" asked Guilford.

"One is asleep, with his head laid on the table; the other is stretched on the bed in boots and sword, and snoring away like a swine."

"So much the better. Where is my mother?"

"She is in the back room," said Anne; "but I have"—

"Have what?" asked Guilford, seeing her hesitate, and draw back, after seeming about to make some important communication to him.

"I forget. Nothing."

"You remain here with Anne, Robin, until I return," said Guilford. "I wish to speak a few words with my mother. I have then something I wish to say to you."

"I will stay with Anne with pleasure," answered Robin.

"Now, sweet Anne, what did I tell thee? Did I not say he loved thee only as a cousin? Thou seest he cared not a stiver for my being with thee so many hours of moonlight, whereas, if he had loved thee, he would have shown his jealousy; for beshrew me! suppose I, loving thee as I do, should ha' come home late at night and found thee up with a young fellow in a bower, his arm about thy waist, and thy hand in his; should I not have taken fire, and had a quarrel with thee on the spot? To be sure. Love would act no otherwise. He thanks me for keeping thee company as quietly as if thou wert his sister, and now marches into the house, bidding me keep thee company a little longer. Does this look as if he loved thee other than as a cousin, thinkest thou?"

"I am satisfied now, Robin?" answered Anne, with tears in her eyes. "I see that he cares nothing for me."

"Then why wilt thou not care for me? I love thee with all my heart! I will try and make thee happy. You will never find a truer heart than that I offer thee."

"I will be thine, Robin. I know you love me. I will think no more of my Cousin Guilford."

At hearing this, the happy Robin caught the fair girl to his heart, and imprinted upon her lips the seal of betrothal. The kiss was strangely echoed, as if a person had thrust his finger into his cheek and drawn it out quickly, causing a popping sound. Both looked up and beheld Digby.

"That's what I like to see," he said. "Nothing like loving one another. Well, I'll let the whole village know of it to-morrow; and when you are married you must invite Digby. You can't have a wedding without Digby. Nothing goes on right without Digby. Where is Master Guilford gone, Miss Anne?"

"In the house," answered the maiden, blushing and laughing. "Oh, you eavesdropper! Come hither, Digby. If you will say nothing about this, I will give you a silver sixpence next Saturday night to drink the prince's health."

"Well, I won't, blame me if I do," answered Digby, as he stretched upon one of the settles, to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN INTERESTING COMMUNICATION.

GUILFORD found the door of the cottage ajar, and pushing it softly he entered the small, plainly furnished front room. A lamp filled with fish-oil burned upon the table, with a huge "thief" upon the wick. By its light he saw the two troopers. Upon a small truckle-bed in the corner lay one of them, sleeping off the potations of negus with which he and his comrade had been abundantly plied by the good dame, who desired to get them in a state of quiescence as soon as possible—a result in which she had admirably succeeded. Sleeping heavily, and with a loud, sonorous breathing, the other trooper sat by the table, his head among the cups, and resting on his thickly-gloved hand. His black beard lay out upon the board like a mop, while the light shone upon the round, closely-shaven head, giving it the appearance of a porcupine rolled up into a ball. By the side of his head lay his pistolet, the grasp of his hand holding it loosely, in his sleep. The two men reminded Guilford of two wild beasts he had once seen crushed and reposing in a cage.

Having surveyed the scene, he stepped across the threshold and passed lightly into the room. He stood for an instant looking at the sallow face of Strait-gate, who lay on the bed, and wondering that so wicked a countenance could have a soul quiet enough to sleep. As for Broad-way, he saw in him one of those half devils, half highwaymen, so common in Cromwell's army, who, with a few scraps of the Old Testament on their lips, passed for pious covenanters, and under the cloak of religion did all sorts of enormities.

"Let them sleep; I have no wish to disturb them," said Guilford, passing on and opening the inner door of his

mother's room. "I have already placed one of their number in the sleep that knows no waking." And with this recollection of what he had done the evening before, came over his mind for the first time the thought that he might possibly be recognized by some of the party who had been nighest when he shot the soldiers, though it was moonlight and not broad day, and no one came within twenty yards of him, save the horseman who was drowned in trying to swim his horse round the promontory.

Upon hearing the door open, his mother looked up from her needle, and seeing him, uttered an exclamation of joy, and going towards him to meet him, made at the same time a gesture of silence and warning.

"I am so glad you have returned, my dear son," she said, as she led him to a seat. "You have been gone full eight hours."

"It has been an eventful eight hours to me, my dear mother."

"I have been trembling lest you should have come into collision with Lord Rudolph, at the castle. Did you see the Lady Kate, my boy?"

"Yes, mother, and all is as I would desire. I will tell you by and by, when we are alone. Those men in the other room must have annoyed you not a little."

"They did at first, but they soon drank themselves to insensibility. But where is Anne, that she did not come in with you?"

"She is at the gate with Robin."

"Yes. He loves her, and I wish she could return his attachment. She had best come in, now you are at home; but I sent her out, as the soldiers got to be something rude of speech towards her."

"They had best keep their tongues under civility," answered Guilford, "or I will show them that there are men in England besides Cromwell's myrmidons."

"Hist, Guilford! They will hear you. As it is, they do not suspect us of being opposed to the government. But

listen to me; I have something of moment to communicate to thee; and for this I have been so anxious to have thee come back."

"But first hear what will please you, my mother. My interview with Lady Kate resulted in her refusal to permit me to cease to think of her, and it is decided that I am to seek my fortune in the world, and some bright day come back to ask her hand."

"Ah, my boy, fortune is fickle. But the Lady Catharine shows a truly noble nature."

"I have no doubt that I shall be able to win some name that will make me less obscure, and more worthy to ask her hand of her noble father. Would she wed me to-morrow, I am too proud to become her husband as I am—a poor young fisherman. I will win rank and name, and lay them at her feet. Because she loves me in my humble state, shall I willingly consent that she shall wed one so lowly? Shall I thus reward her generous love?"

"Thou art noble in mind, my boy," said his mother, "and deservest her."

"Mother, thou hast heard of Red Hand?"

"Oh, Red Hand, the noted sea warrior, whose very name strikes such terror along the coast! What of him, Guilford?"

"Dost thou know his history?"

"Nay, I do recollect that it is said he was one of King Charles's nobles, and that, when he was to have been executed, he placed his hand beneath the axe instead of his head, and with the other wrenched the weapon from the headsman's grasp, and with it cut his way to the water-side and escaped in a ship."

"This is partly true."

"I know Cromwell has offered a reward for his head, and therefore"—

"You fancy he must be a pirate."

"I know not what he is. Men say he is greatly to be feared. He has burned full a score of castles and towns on the coast."

"These were those places in which Cromwell's minions dwelt—places which, by falsehood and wrong, they had robbed loyal nobles. I have seen this sea-king, and spoken with him, mother."

"Spoken with Red Hand?"

"Yes; I have been on board his vessel, which to-night was not two leagues from the land, opposite the village. He is a proper gentleman. He is the Earl of Villiers, a true-hearted nobleman, and friend of both the late king and Prince Charles."

"Speak lower, for there are strange ears near us."

"The two brutes are asleep, and I pray they may not wake till morning. Yes, mother, Earl Villiers is a true Englishman. He commands a ship because he cannot command a fleet. His wars are made only against the usurper. His ship is the only remnant of the true British navy, and he the only British admiral, as Charles, the wanderer prince, is the only British king. But these things will not always be so. In a few days I shall, if nothing more favorable turns up, offer myself to this admiral of the Red Hand, and win fame under his flag."

"If this terrible captain be a true earl, who only seeks the rights of his king, I do not say aught against this, Guilford, save that I shall be grieved to have thee leave my roof and my side. But mothers cannot always hope to have their boys with them; and I hope to see you yet distinguish yourself."

"You will not be alone, mother. Anne will remain, and if she marries Robin"—

"Marries Robin! I wish she would, indeed."

"There is little doubt of it from what I saw to-night. They are lovers, or lovers never were."

"That is good news. I knew she need never look to you."

"Look to me, mother! Who?"

"Anne. Bless me, how odd you have never seen it in her eyes. She has loved you better than cousin ought to love, Guilford."

“I was not aware of it. But now you speak of it, I do recollect some things that make me think you are right. But Robin will make her far happier. They will marry and live with you, and you will hardly miss me. I will have my boat repaired to-morrow, and give it to you. Has there been any excitement in the village to-night, early in the evening? Have you heard anything about any of the troopers having been shot?”

“Surely I did. Fuss enough was made about it. The troopers here heard firing, and went out, and after a long time came back, and swore dreadful oaths, and said some smugglers had shot three of their party, who were pursuing a loyalist. They made great talk of it in their cups, and swore dreadfully how they would on the morrow have vengeance.”

“Smugglers, they said, did they, mother?”

“I believe so; but do not raise your voice so loud, for I dare say we’ve been overheard in half we’ve said by the poor gentleman, if by chance he’s awake.”

Here the good dame cast her eyes up at the trap in the ceiling.

“What poor gentleman? What do you mean, mother?”

“Hush! The troopers’ll hear you, and then it’s all up with him, be he peasant or prince, gentle or simple. There is a man hid up in the hemp-loft,” she added, whispering close in his ear, and then clapping her fingers across his mouth. “Not a word. I fancy he is a loyalist. Don’t speak, and I’ll tell you all about it, for I want your advice to know what to do with him.”

“If he is a loyalist, I will aid him to the best of my ability, mother. But when and how did he come here?”

“That I will tell you. You see, after you went out, and had been gone a little while, the two soldiers came in and invited themselves to take up their quarters for the night. After eating their supper and drinking, they got up and went out, as they said, to make a search of the premises, to see what out-houses, boats, hiding-places and such things, for concealing and escaping in we had.”

“The prying devils!”

“Hist! They had not gone out, scarcely, before I saw a face looking in upon me at that window. Before I could make out who it might be, the window was raised, and in stepped a stranger. He came so lightly to the floor, looked so beseechingly and suffering-like, and had altogether such an appearance of weariness and flight, that I at once felt my charity warm towards him kindly; and knowing how many good men there are who are wanderers in their own, or what is worse, foreign lands, I bethought me this man might be one of them. The idea that he was a robber or a criminal never once entered my mind. He asked me in a voice that was courteous and respectful, if I would conceal him before the soldiers came back.”

“Then he knew they were quartered here?” said Guilford, who had listened with deepest interest to her words.

“Yes, for he had plainly been watching their departure; and, as they went out one way, he came in another way, as I told you. I instantly closed this door, dropped the curtains, that no one might see into the room, and pointing to the ladder, told him to conceal himself at once in the loft. He obeyed at once, and having given him food and drink, I removed the ladder.”

“Have you spoken with him since?”

“Not a word. He is as quiet as the grave. I think he must be asleep, for he looked ready to drop. You should have seen what a white hand he had.”

“How old a man is he?”

“About thirty; but he looked pale and haggard, and might not have been so much.”

“How was he dressed?”

“In a sort of grayish black, plain and coarse, and much worn and road soiled. His hair was jet black, and so were his eyes; and his manners were those of a gentleman; that I saw at once.”

“I would like to know who he is, mother,” said Guilford, who had listened to all she had said with the liveliest

attention. "He is without doubt one of the prince's friends, who are hunted like wild beasts throughout the kingdom."

"What if it should be the prince himself?" whispered the good dame, with a wistful look.

"It can hardly be; yet it is clear he is expected to seek the coast, and should he do so, he is likely to come pretty much as this stranger has presented himself to you. Whoever he is, he needs our protection, and his life may depend on our care and discretion."

"What can be done?"

"That must be reflected upon, dear mother. It will not be safe for him to remain where he is. If a search of the house should take place, the loft will not escape their eyes. I must, however, first see him and know what he would have."

CHAPTER XIV.

GUILFORD'S PLAN FOR ESCAPE.

THUS speaking, Guilford returned into the front room, where the two men still slept heavily as before, and in the same postures. He then looked out of the door, and seeing Robin and Anne seated beneath the arbor, quite oblivious, apparently, of the passing time, he softly regained the room where his mother was, and bolted the door which led between the two apartments.

"Now, my dear mother, I want you to take a seat against this door, and if the soldiers either of them should wake and attempt to come in, tell them that it is your private room, and they cannot be admitted. On no account suffer them to enter; and if they force the door, I will shoot them down. I am going to have an interview with this stranger, whose misfortunes have driven him for shelter to our roof."

Thereupon Guilford replaced the ladder to its usual place beneath the trap-door, and ascended it. He tapped lightly upon the ceiling, and was answered by another rap, equally low.

"Are you asleep, sir?" asked Guilford.

"No," answered the voice; and the trap was cautiously raised. "I know you are come to me as a friend, for I have overheard your conversation with your mother. I therefore let you up without suspicion. I am inexpressibly thankful to find myself in the house of two such loyal friends as I find you and the good dame are."

The words were spoken in an undertone, but with a cadence that pleased Guilford's ear, and attracted him at once to the stranger before beholding his face. Asking his mother for a light, he ascended with it, and bidding her

remove the ladder, he closed the trap and stood face to face with his guest.

The countenance he beheld was wholly unknown to him, but answered to his mother's description as that of a pale, harassed-looking young cavalier of thirty, with black hair and eyes, and an intellectual expression.

"Whosoever you may be, sir, you are a welcome guest beneath our humble roof," said Guilford. "What can I do for you—for I presume you are one of the prince's friends?"

"Yes, my dear young man, and I have sought the coast with the forlorn hope of obtaining passage in some fishing-boat to the French coast. But I find that the coast is vigilantly guarded, and in this very house are quartered some of Cromwell's troopers."

"Yes, two drunken rogues, shaven like monks and bearded like Turks, are now sleeping off their potations in the room below."

"This would be a favorite time to elude them if a boat could be had. Art thou not a fisherman?"

"Yes, sir cavalier, but my only boat was to-day, or rather yesterday, stoven, and is not fit to push off."

"I will give thee all the gold I have, which is one hundred louis, to purchase another for me."

"Thou wilt need all thy gold, sir cavalier. I can obtain another boat of a comrade, but"—

"But what, my young friend?" asked the stranger, who seemed to hang on his words with nervous fear.

"The difficulty is to get off from the coast unseen. There are not only troops placed in our houses, but they are posted as sentries along the streets, and have the beach in full view for miles. It would be almost impossible to get a boat off with any chance of success."

The stranger clasped his hands together with an expression of anguish.

"So *near* liberty and yet not to be able to obtain it!"

"Does thy life pay the forfeit, sir, of thy capture?" asked Guilford, whose heart was deeply moved by his distress.

“Assuredly, my friend.”

“And thou art a true friend of the prince?”

“He has none nearer.”

“Then I will save thee if it be possible, by aiding thee to reach the French coast. But the prince, where is he? Hast thou any tidings of him since he was seen last in Scotland?”

“He still wanders. Like me he seeks to find shelter in France. Suppose I were the Prince Charles himself, what couldst thou do for me, if I told thee I was in thy hands?”

“I would save thee or perish!” answered Guilford; “and I will do all I can for one who loves him and suffers for him. Here it is not safe for thee to remain till morning.”

“Young man,” said the stranger, “if thou savest me, the prince will not fail to reward thee.”

“I ask no reward, sir cavalier, save success. I will go and see how I can best secure your safety.”

With these words Guilford took leave of his guest, deeply interested in him, and opening the trap-door, dropped lightly to the floor.

“Mother, he is a cavalier, and friend of the prince, and his life is forfeit if he be taken. He brings no other news of Prince Charles than that he is a wanderer like himself. Now I must get him out from here, and to the sea-side. I have resolved to try and get him across the channel.”

“You will risk your own life, my son.”

“Do not think of me, mother. I shall do nothing rashly. Give me thy brown long gown, and shawl, and hood.”

“Here they are. What wouldst thou with them?”

“To hand them up to our guest to put on.”

Guilford suited the action to the word, by rolling the articles in a bundle and passing them up to the fugitive.

“Put these on and wait till I knock thrice on the trap, and then come boldly down. Now, mother,” he added, as the trap-door was once more closed, and the ladder carefully removed, “I want you to put on your other shawl and hood and walk out with me.”

“Whither?”

"It matters not, dear mother. Do not ask me questions that I perhaps can't answer; but if you will kindly do as I say, we may save the young cavalier."

"I will be guided by you in everything, my son," said she, putting on her shawl and hood.

"That is right, mother. These barbarians of Cromwell's are still snoring. They sleep sound as moles."

"I drugged their negus to make them sleep and keep them quiet," answered his mother.

"That accounts for it. It is the more favorable to us. Now take my arm and come with me."

The good dame placed her arm in his, and crossing noiselessly the room where the troopers were, they went out by the gate of the cottage. Here they met with Robin and Anne, who hardly realized how the night they had so lovingly passed was wearing towards morning. They both started consciously as they saw Dame Graham and Guilford.

"You've come at last, Guilford," said Robin, not knowing anything else to say.

"Yes; and I warrant me you were not over weary waiting for me. I want you, Robin."

"Anne, you had best go softly in and remain in the back room; if the troopers should wake up, you can bolt the door."

"Let Anne wait here by the gate, mother. You will not be away five minutes. Robin, go to your boat; place secretly three days' provisions in it, and put off as expeditiously as you can, as if on a fishing cruise. Soon as you get out half a mile, lower your sails and row back in the direction of the beach rock, landing beyond it on the castle side. There you will find me to take on board. Do not delay, and be discreet and cautious; for the least imprudence will create suspicion among the coast guard."

Robin signified his readiness to do as his friend Guilford had directed, and immediately left the cottage gate and walked towards his own cabin, a quarter of a mile further east, along the shore-curved street of the little port. He was stopped by two troopers, who, satisfying themselves that he

was a fisherman, and not a prince in disguise, let him pass. At the door of his own hut he found three of the guard seated drinking ale and eating rolls and dried fish. He adroitly got them into conversation upon the comparative speed of boats and horses, and drew them down to the cove, fifty paces off, where his own smack lay, and got them to examining it, he the while decanting upon its speed. He then proposed to show them with what rapidity he could row it, saying, "As it is near day, it is time I should get ready to go out to fish; but first I will show you her mettle."

He then went in for his oars, and at the same time filled a bag with fish and bread, and took a breaker of fresh water with him. These he placed in the boat before their eyes, trusting to their absence of all suspicion that he had any second purpose in view. At length, having got all prepared, he loosed his boat and got to his oars, and was about to row her out, when a fourth, in the uniform of a sergeant, came up and demanded what boat was putting off.

"A fisher's lad going off to cruise the day in the channel catching fish," answered a trooper; "and he has bet a hundred mackerel that his boat, with two oars, can beat the best hunter in England."

"He is a braggart," answered the sergeant. "But who has been in the boat and seen that there is no Prince Charley hidden in the cuddie? By the beard of Cromwell, it would hide two men!"

The boat was detained and the cuddie carefully examined, when, as nothing was discovered like a refugee, and Robin being clearly the only person on board, he was suffered to put off. His bungling rowing to and fro, however, as he knew it would be, was laughed at by the soldiers, and having acknowledged that his craft was not in trim, he hoisted sail, and told them that when he had caught the hundred mackerel, he would not fail to pay his bet. He was soon rapidly leaving the shore behind, and the forms of the soldiers soon blended with the indistinct objects on the land. When he had gained half a mile from the beach, he lowered

his two sails, and taking to his oars, pulled towards the point nearly a mile westerly, where Guilford had promised to be found.

We now return to the young fisherman who was so generously about to attempt to save his guest from the power of the usurper. When Robin took leave of him to go on the mission we have seen him accomplish so successfully, Guilford, with his mother leaning on his arm, walked along the village street in the direction which led towards the castle. They soon came to two troopers, who were standing in the street acting as guards. The moonlight shone full upon them, and in one of them Guilford recognized the soldier who had before challenged him. As the young man and his mother drew near, one of the men stepped across the way and presented his sword.

“What, pray, is this, my fine couple?” he said.

“This is my mother, and as for me, I told you who I was some while ago,” answered Guilford, firmly.

“Yes, I recollect thee now; but we must see thy face. We must not let any nose pass us under cover. A woman’s hood, before now, has hid a man’s beard.”

Dame Graham put back her hood and showed him a dignified, but pale, matronly face, that abashed his insolence.

“Pardon us, ma’am; but we must be strict.”

“Can we pass on?” asked Guilford.

“Whither?”

“To the castle. There is a sick person there who suffers, and your orders are not so strict as to prevent passing to and fro on the land.”

“No—it is the sea we are to watch.”

Guilford then went on a few steps, and when beyond ear-shot, he said quickly to his mother:—

“Pretend that thou hast forgotten the lint, and go back as for it; but instead of coming back thyself, send the guest, telling him I wait here, and that he must join me and take my arm without a word, in your place. They will not a second time lift the veil.”

"I now understand all," said his mother.

"Sir soldiers, my mother would return a moment to the house for something," he said, returning where the two men stood. "Be quick, dear mother, and I will remain talking with these brave soldiers."

The good dame hastened towards her house, leaving Guilford with the troopers.

CHAPTER XV.

SUCCESS OF GUILFORD'S MANŒUVRE.

"THOU art a tall youth to be under thy mother's eye still, young man," said the trooper who had been chief spokesman. "Fishing must be fool's pastime for a brave spirit, as thine should be by thine eye. Why wilt thou not enlist in the troop, and follow the fortunes of a soldier?"

"My mother has only me, and if I should fall in battle she would be desolate."

"We should be better weaned than to think of mothers when our beards are grown, young fellow. A man's mother is his country, and he rightly obeys her when he takes up arms to defend her against tyranny." A pause.

"Come to the inn in the morn, where our captain is, and thou shalt put thy name down and be paid two gold nobles, and the horse and armor of the man who was shot early to-night, by one of the smugglers, shall be thine."

"I will see thy captain, it may be, and think of this. I would rather have a wider field than this to act my part in."

“Ay, that thou oughtest, man. To-morrow we are going on a fancy party to ferret out these smugglers or what not that rescued the loyalist last night, and shot that ‘lion of the desert,’ even the brave trooper ‘Despise not Prophecyings.’”

“What loyalist?”

“That is not known for certain. That he was one, is clear, for he refused to drink to Oliver’s health; and he fought like a tiger when he was set upon, and ran like a dromedary when he could fight no longer against odds. We would have had him had he not been rescued by a party of smugglers, as some say they were, who got him off safe. Our captain swears he was the famed Red Hand, the channel cruiser, because his right hand was missing. But, for my part, the blood of one royalist is as red as that of another.”

“Dost thou expect to find smugglers on the coast to-morrow?” asked Guilford, whose eyes were anxiously turned towards the gate of the cottage.

“That may be as it turns out. A little brush with the rogues and a good deal of booty would enliven these dull times.”

At this moment Guilford’s eyes were gladdened by the sight of a female figure, clad like his mother, issuing from the cottage gate. He knew at a glance that it was not she, and his heart bounded with hope and fear in contemplating the advance of the disguised royalist. The walk was wholly unlike that of his mother, and by no means as graceful; but he hoped the soldiers would not mark the difference.

“Good-night, gentlemen; I see my mother has got what she went after, and is returning,” said Guilford, walking forward to meet the disguised guest.

“You will not forget the gold nobles and to see the captain at the inn?” called one of the soldiers.

“No. I hope to meet you there also.”

By this time he met the loyalist, and, taking his arm beneath his own, whispered:—

“Walk more softly, and keep hooded. There is no danger if you do not speak.”

It was a thrilling moment when Guilford came up again to the men in order to pass them. He was, however, perfectly cool and self-possessed.

“We must stop again, mother, for doubtless these brave soldiers will have to make thee show thy face a second time, to see that no beard hath grown on it within the last five minutes.”

“Nay, young fellow, thou and thy mother may pass when thou wilt,” answered the nearest soldier laughingly. “When thou gettest to be a trooper, thou wilt then learn to obey orders.”

“I blame thee not, sir trooper,” answered Guilford, as he walked on slowly, in order to keep at feminine moderation the tendency of his companion to make rapid strides. At every yard which separated him from the two soldiers, his heart beat lighter and his breath drew freer. At length, after walking on about five minutes, and when he could scarcely distinguish the forms of the two men from the black posts to which the fishermen secured their boats, he said, in a tone of joy:—

“Now, sir cavalier, thou mayest speak. We are safe, at least for the present. Thou canst look out of thy hood.”

The cavalier, whom Dame Graham had so promptly and skillfully put in her own place, then threw partly back his hood, and looked around him, but not before pressing the young fisherman’s hand in both of his, and saying:—

“Heaven reward thee! Thou hast done this well and faithfully, and with remarkable courage. I was never in more imminent peril of capture, and yet, under thy managing guidance, with so little reason to fear. What lofty castle is this?” he asked, as his eye fell upon the elevated towers and battlements of Castle Vane, beneath the shadow of which he was walking.

“It is Castle Vane.”

“Well do I know the family. Never was a more loyal subject than Lord Vane. But rumor says his son is Cromwell’s tool.”

"Yes, so I have heard," answered Guilford, whose glances were continually scanning the water, searching for Robin's little bark, which yet did not appear in sight.

The cavalier also turned his eyes wistfully on the sparkling waves, and paused to contemplate them for a moment.

"Oh, road to liberty!—yet a more insurmountable walk than if thou were built of adamant, high as heaven!"

"Do not stop, my lord. We must still hasten forward; for though the last guard of troopers has been passed in this direction, yet our stratagem may be detected, and pursuit made."

"I need no inducements to move on, my true and faithful deliverer," answered the royalist; "but I am something wearied, having walked for many days and laid abroad of nights, and had little food."

"I pity thy distresses, sir."

"I hope fortune will one day enable me to reward thee," answered the stranger, with a grateful tremor in his tones.

"But I am solicitous lest harm should happen to thy mother for the part she hath taken."

"No; it was known to no one that you were in the house; and I instructed her not to suffer herself to be seen until after sunrise, lest indeed, by chance, the two troopers should question her how she got back unseen, and so place her in a dangerous position."

"That was judicious and thoughtful in you. I will therefore not suffer my fears to be awakened about her. But when I know that upon whomsoever aids me I am bringing danger, I sometimes feel like giving myself up to my fate before I will involve any more kind and noble hearts in assisting me to escape. We have here a barrier. How shall we surmount it?" he suddenly demanded, upon finding the beach terminate.

"Here is a boat, my lord," said Guilford, who gave the stranger the title of respect, judging from his manner, and that he was a partizan of the prince, that he must be noble; "we will enter it and row around it."

Upon their reaching the other side, Guilford, with an exclamation of pleasure, pointed seaward.

"A boat! Oh, that I were so happy as to be on board of it, with its head pointed towards France!" was the exclamation of the wanderer, with clasped hands.

"I think it is the boat I ordered to come round and meet us here," answered Guilford. "When it gets a little nearer, I can tell."

"And you have perfected your plan so far as to provide a boat! Ah! this is more than I hoped! When I saw this cliff, I believed you were seeking some secret cavern wherein to conceal me; and my heart was heavy with the thought of more delay and confinement and anxiety before I should kiss the blessed sands of France."

"It is Robin's boat. I know it now by the white tops to its masts."

"And is Robin's boat that you sent for to embark us in?"

"Yes, my lord. Robin is a youth, and supports himself by fishing. He is my truest friend, and can be trusted."

"I know it, if he is thy friend. It seems a brave, strong boat, with sails."

"It has crossed the channel in the wildest weather, my lord."

"Then my hour of safety seems to have come at last. This skiff, which holds but two, and scarce floats for leaking," he added, pointing to the small boat in which they had paddled round the rock, "this I would have ventured in, rather than not have attempted it. To die exerting one's self for liberty, is better than to live as I have lived the past fifty days. Oh, young man, you know little of the sufferings I have endured. But the sight of the bark makes me forget all!"

"I trust, my lord, that before noon you will be safe where you wish to be."

"Thanks, thanks, my friend! I pray that if this blessing be granted me, it be given soon to the poor friends and wanderers I leave still behind."

“Thou meanest the prince, and the four or five nobles who hold to him?”

“They did hold to him till they were compelled, for *his* safety, to leave him, and each seek a different route to the coast.”

“If, after I safely place thee in France, I can return unsuspected, my lord, I will do all in my power to get the rest over. In particular would I be happy to be the instrument of saving the prince.”

“And wherefore in particular, my young friend?” asked the noble, who was seated on a rock, watching the advancing fishing-boat.

“Frankly, my lord, I will tell thee. Thou didst overhear my conversation with my mother, and need not be told that I love a high-born maiden—even the daughter of the lord of this castle.”

“And I would swear thou art worthy of her.”

“I am too proud to offer her a fisherman for a husband. If I could aid the prince, perhaps he would take me into his service.”

“But he is poor, and has not men, nor arms, coffers nor coin, young man.”

“He will one day, I am confident, sit on the throne of his martyred father. He is too deeply seated in the hearts of the English people to remain long out of the seat of the kingdom.”

“By the rood! thou speakest like a prophet!” exclaimed the noble, starting to his feet, and gazing with admiration upon the young man. “I pray that thy words may come true. And if the prince come to his own, thou shalt not be forgotten. He who has served one of his friends serves him. I will take care that thy good service to me this night shall not be forgotten. Would that England had ten thousand young men with hearts and hands as loyal as thine!”

At this crisis the little bark drew so close that Guilford recognized Robin, who, shipping his oars, steered the boat,

with what impetus his rowing had given it, directly alongside the rock.

“Thou hast done well, Robin, and in good time; for I see the dawn is breaking. Now, my lord, step into the boat, and the next land thy foot touches shall be that of France.”

“Amen, my friend!” answered the noble, as he leaped into the boat and stood in the stern. “Farewell, poor England! One of these days thou wilt take to thy bosom gladly the children that thou now drivest from thee.”

Guilford saw that tears came into his eyes, and this emotion endeared him still more to him; for he saw that he possessed all the sensibilities that became a man. He now assisted Robin in hoisting the sails, for there was a six-knot breeze from the northwest; and, taking the helm, while Robin was entrusted with the charge of trimming the canvas, he steered away from the castle rock and lay his course at first south-by-west, in order to keep from being seen from the village when they should clear the rock.

When they had got out about fifty yards, and were sailing along smoothly, the nobleman was seen by Guilford to sink upon his knees and remain some minutes in prayer. He then rose, and, embracing his deliverer, he called Robin, and said:—

“Let me take thee by the hand. I owe thee much also, and must owe thee more before I reach France. I am told thou art the friend of this brave young man.”

“I love Guilford as a brother,” answered Robin, with honest warmth.

Suddenly a voice called to them from the shore,—an eager but suppressed voice, its tones being doubtful and yet thrilling, as if fear and hope impelled the speaker.

“The boat! Art thou fishermen?”

“Yes,” answered Guilford, as he discerned the figures of two men in the mouth of a sort of gorge that was at the westward of the castle rock.

“Come to the shore and take us on board, and we will pay thee well.”

"I fear that it is a lure," said Guilford.

"I think I recognize the voice," said the stranger. "Hold! Let me speak."

"Nay, my lord, you may betray yourself. I will hail them. Who are you, and where do you wish to go?"

"Land, and we will tell thee," answered another.

"I know them!" cried the stranger to Guilford, in earnest excitement, laying his hand on his shoulder. "They are two of the prince's friends. Will you take them?"

"Willingly. Think you the prince is one of them?"

"We may hear from him through them, my young friend. Steer at once to where they stand, for delay may be fatal to them with so many enemies about."

Guilford at once ran the smack to the little cove in the land where two men stood. On coming near, he saw, from their torn apparel and haggard air, that they were fugitives. They were so impatient to quit the land, that they both sprang on board.

"Take us across to France, and we will repay you well, for we have gold," they said, talking like men who had life at stake.

The stranger, who still wore the female dress, and who had purposely concealed himself behind the sail, was now seen by them. They stared at him, and then took their seats as if too weary to stand. They then looked earnestly at Robin and Guilford.

"You are fishermen, then?" said the elder of the two.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you take us over to Normandy?"

"It is a dangerous trip, sirs, but as I am going over, you shall have passage."

"How fortunate! We will give you gold."

"I am well paid, gentlemen."

"But will you take this woman over?"

"Yes," answered Guilford, and would have added, "she is a fugitive disguised also," but for a pressure upon the arm by the stranger, as a hint to keep his secret.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO THE FUGITIVE WAS.

WE now see our youthful hero, Guilford, once more setting sail for the French side of the channel, with three royalists. It has been an eventful twenty-four hours to him, and has done more to develop his true character than all the previous events of his life. All at once he felt that he had merged from the obscure and humble village fisher to be a person of no little consideration, if he were to be judged by the part he had played. But he was not elated. He secretly hoped that this turn of his affairs was to lead him on to fortune.

When the smack, which Robin had named the "Pretty Anne," had got out a mile, the day had begun to brighten up so clearly in the east that the moonlight paled before it. Soon the light of the broad morning filled the air, and when they were a league from the land the sun rose in dazzling splendor out of the waters. Cheerfulness sat upon the haggard faces of the two fugitives as they saw receding the shores of England, and the distant blue line of France grow more distinct.

"Young men," said one of them, whose beard and locks were mingled with gray, "you will be remembered by us to the latest hour of our lives. We must take your names, that our friends may know them, and love the two fisher's lads who aided us to escape from death to safety."

"I knew, my lord," said Guilford, "that fugitive friends of the prince were expected on the coast in a short time, and knew you to be them."

"Yes, doubtless, for we carry our fortunes in our rags and visages. But it is surprising and providential that we should

have found a boat so soon, and one that would receive us. Oh, that the prince could be as fortunate!”

“Hast thou heard of any royalist escaping in a boat within a day or two?” asked the younger cavalier, who was a fair young man, with a dark blue eye and a Scottish physiognomy.

“There was a brave man escaped yesterday from the village after great peril. It was at sunset, or a little after.”

“Ah! it must have been the prince,” exclaimed the elder, “for he must have reached the coast about that time.”

“No, it was the Earl Villiers, whom they call Red Hand,” answered Guilford.

“The Earl Villiers!” exclaimed the stranger in a tone that, coming from the woman’s hood, made the two cavaliers start with surprise, and stare with doubt both at Guilford and his disguised passenger.

“We are betrayed!” cried the young Scot, with a flashing eye, as he drew a long glittering knife.

“There is no treason here,” said Guilford. “This person is also a fugitive in disguise, whom I was taking over when you hailed me. If he wishes to conceal himself from you, I cannot prevent it. But I trust you are well known to each other.”

“There needs no more disguise or concealment, my friends all,” exclaimed the stranger, throwing back his hood and extending a hand to each of the fugitives. “Algernon, welcome! Catesby, I embrace you again!”

“My prince!” cried the elderly noble kneeling, and kissing the hand extended to him, while Catesby pressed his knees, and bathed his hands with tears of joy.

“Heaven be praised! Once more we meet, and in safety!”

“I would have made myself known to you, my trusty friends, but I wished to defer it until landing, that I might then take my young friend by surprise, and let him know that he had indeed saved Prince Charles! This is a happy meeting for us after all our sufferings together.”

“Too much joy! too much joy! That we should find thee in the very boat in which we have taken shelter! This day Cromwell’s hatred has forever lost its victim.”

Guilford had witnessed this revelation of the prince to his partners in danger and flight, with amazement. He stood beholding him without power to utter a word. A half-formed idea that all his hopes were now in the budding, and that Lady Kate would yet be his, danced bewilderingly through his mind. Robin stood with open mouth, in wonder and delight.

“Nay, my friends,” said Prince Charles, “you must not be shut out from being partakers of all this joy. You have, you find, had your wish gratified, and have ‘the prince’ in your boat.”

“And I will save thee or die, my prince!” exclaimed Guilford, kneeling, and kissing his hand. “This is the happiest and proudest moment of my life.”

Robin also came forward and saluted the excited monarch, and all was joy and intense excitement.

While the little vessel, with its precious freight, was dancing on its way, Guilford directed Robin to bring up the provisions from the cuddie, and the prince and his two lords made a royal feast of it, with such appetites as long fasting invariably lends to both king and peasant.

The sun was an hour high when they had all got through their morning’s repast, and then Guilford urged the prince to take some repose in one of the berths of the small cabin.

“This is well proposed, my young friend,” he said, “for I have had little sleep for the week past.”

Leaving the helm in charge of Robin, Guilford went into the cuddie and arranged as well as he could the cot of dry sea-weed for the prince, and when he would have apologized for its roughness, the latter said, cheerfully:—

“Do not say one word, my dear Guilford, for I have learned to sleep as hard as the poorest of my subjects. I am used to rough fare and rough lodgings. But keep good watch, and do not let any large vessel come too near us.”

Guilford, having seen Prince Charles lie down to rest, returned to the deck. The faces of the two exiles beamed upon him with grateful smiles as he re-appeared.

"You are the happiest and most to be envied Englishman that this day lives, young man," said Lord Algernon, smiling; "for you have under your charge the prince on whose safety depends the fate of England."

"I am happier than I can express," answered Guilford, resuming the helm, while he gave an order to Robin to trim the sheets. "As we are now a full third of the way across the channel, my lords," he added, "will you say what part of the French coast the prince would like to be landed on?"

"To the east of Cape de la Hague, and as near the Cherbourg landing as may be," answered the Scottish lord. "We have friends there in waiting for many weeks."

"The wind is not exactly fair for making Cherbourg," answered Guilford, looking at the sails and then at the sky; "but, by tacking and running west-by-north four or five miles, we can then go about and make it towards night."

"Is there no danger that we shall be interfered with by the channel ships-of-war that are hovering on the coast to watch against the prince's escape?" asked the gray-bearded earl, with some solicitude, as he cast his eyes about him and saw four or five sails of vessels at various distances, some of them between them and the distant line of the coast of France, and one directly astern, as if in chase.

"Are there ships cruising on the watch, my lords?" asked Guilford, changing color. "I did not imagine danger save from the coast and on shore."

"There is great danger yet," answered both noblemen. "An order has been sent to all the captains of the vessels-of-war to be vigilant in bringing to and examining every boat that crosses the channel."

"I did not know of this," answered Guilford.

He then stood up in the stern of the fishing-vessel, which, being but five tons burthen, did not elevate him but three or four feet above the level of the sea, and with a keen

nautical eye scanned carefully the encircling horizon, commencing north and returning to the same point.

"What do you make out these vessels to be?" asked Lord Algernon Dudley, the old noble, trusting to the skill of the young sailor in matters of which he himself had little experience.

"The vessel astern, my lords, is a ship that has just come out of Portsmouth. I saw her an hour ago, between the Isle of Wight and the main, standing down. She is a Norwegian trader by the shortness of her yards and square make of her bows."

"You observe closely," said the young Scottish lord.

"Yes; we fishermen, passing our lives on the channel, and accustomed to the sight of vessels of all nations, soon discern the difference between those of one country and another, and are able to tell them a long way off."

"Yes, I can understand it," said Lord Catesby; "for in the highlands the shepherds on the hills can often tell men of different clans at a distance long before they can distinguish the plaid of their tartans. What vessel is that to the west? It looks large, like an armed ship."

"It is a ship-of-war of large size," answered Guilford; "but she is standing northward, and is bound to Portsmouth. She will hardly trouble us."

"Then this vessel at the east, which seems to be standing directly down to us?"

"That I am more doubtful about. She is too far off to be well made out, and as her masts range in a line, I can't tell whether she is a ship or brig. But, from the squareness of her yards and the way she settles in the water, I am afraid she is an armed cruiser."

At these words the two nobles looked very naturally anxious, and watched her with close attention. There were two other vessels visible in the far south-western board, but at too remote a distance to be made anything of, save that Guilford was positive they were large three-masted vessels.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DESPERATE STRATAGEM FOILED.

LEAVING the little fishing smack, which held the destinies of England, to dance along over the waves of the channel on its way to the coast of Normandy, we will follow the adventures of another one of the characters of our story.

When Red Hand the earl had regained his own ship, and, after the severe execution of the sentence upon Lord Rudolph, had dismissed the yacht, he gave orders to his lieutenant in command to steer westward until sunrise, and then call him.

“I have not had one hour’s sleep since I left London,” he added to the officer in charge, “and I must have a little rest.”

He then went to his state-room, where he found Edward, the useful and handsome officer already introduced to the reader, engaged in copying papers. Upon the entrance of the earl, the youth looked up and fixed upon the earl his large dark eye, which had as much light in it as a woman’s, and said:—

“My lord, I know not how to contain my joy at your safe return once more to the ship, knowing, as I alone did, the périlous errand on which you went.”

“I had a narrow escape of it more than once, Edward,” answered the earl, throwing himself upon a cushioned settee.

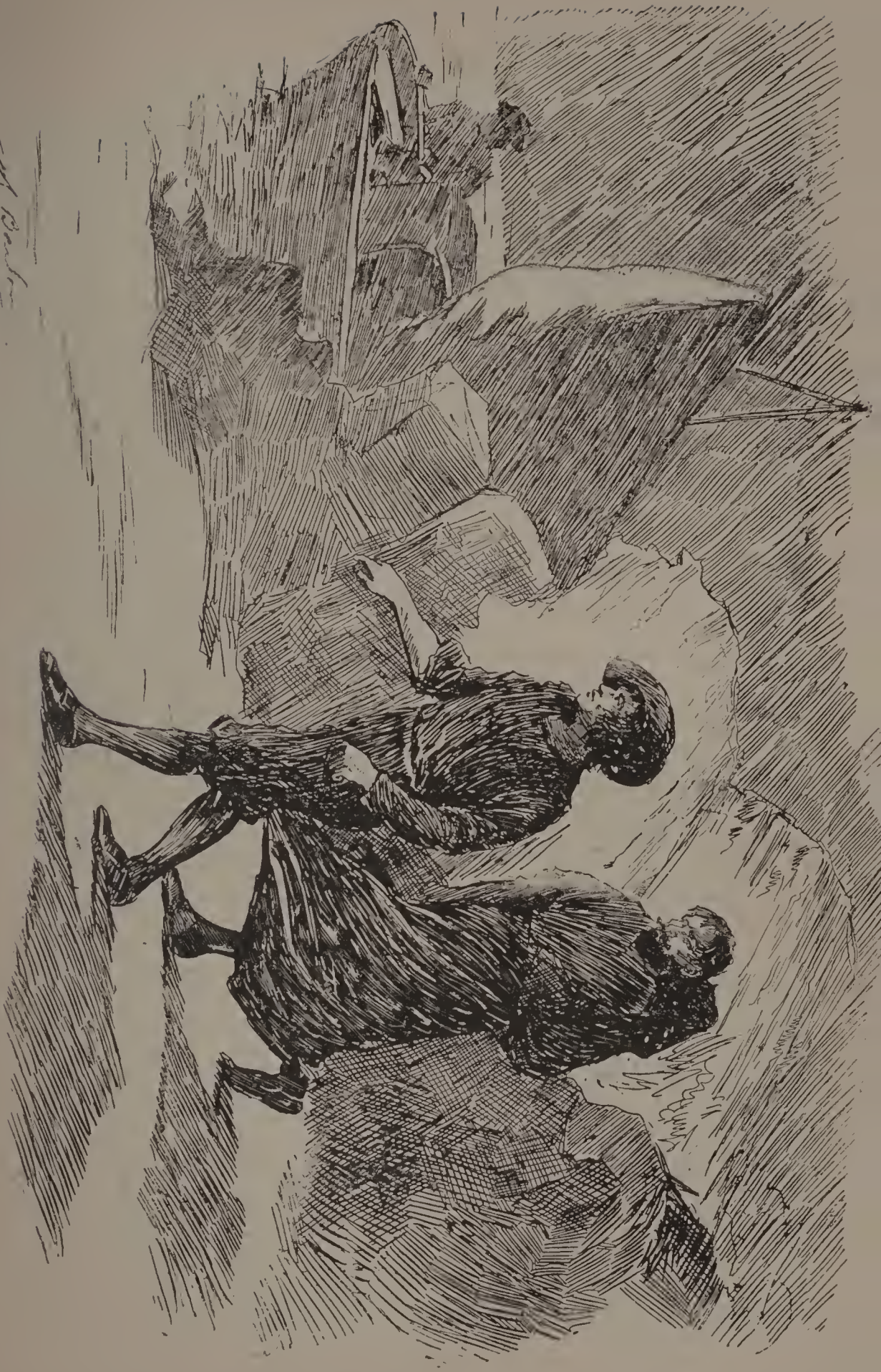
“And what success, my lord?” asked the youth, in a tone that slightly hesitated, as if he feared he ventured too far to make so open an inquiry.

“Cromwell’s head is still on his shoulders, and he is free to ride on England’s neck till a more lucky day for us. Would you like to hear the particulars?”

“Yes, my lord. I will first copy these two remaining lines of the letter you have written to the Duke of Orleans, to be left at Cherbourg.”

The youthful secretary than busied himself a minute till he had completed the task allotted to him, and then placing his pen by his side on the polished Bragiban table, placed himself in an attitude of listening. This young man, whose beauty, as we have said, was almost feminine, was about twenty years of age, slight in figure, but tall, and gracefully made. A brown mustache was just beginning to darken his well cut upper lip, and his rich and shining brown locks curled short about his circular, snow-white neck. His brows were also brown or hazel color, like his hair, and exquisitely arched over a pair of large eyes of the clearest gray. His nose was Persian, straight, and with thin nostrils—generally a mark of high birth. When he spoke, rows of even teeth, as dewy and translucent as pearls, were visible. His hands were as symmetrical as nature could have moulded them, and his whole air and tone were striking and distinguished. There was an expression of sadness upon his face that seemed to be abiding, and to derive itself from a source deeply hidden in his heart. With all his beauty, there was a total absence of consciousness of it, and with all his womanly elegance there was no lack of the proud and manly bearing of his sex. Between him and the earl there appeared to exist a friendship equal and confidential, and which seemed to take no count of the difference in their years. The attire of the young secretary was a suit of black velvet, with here and there a plain gold button, and a silver-hilted sword, worn in a polished Arabian belt at his side.

“The night on which I landed at Hastings,” said Red Hand, “twenty days ago to-day, I found the three men ready with horses to take me to London. I was nearly two days reaching the city, not wishing to ride too fast, lest I should draw attention. I wore my disguise as a Puritan conventicle preacher, and had much honor paid me at several times by Cromwell’s people. At length, safe in London, I put up at



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the house in the Strand where Lord Layton and Germain were lodged. They received me warmly, and asked where I had left my ship. I told them that I had left my vessel off Hastings, but that, by my orders, she was to run to the coast of France and hover about Germany until the twentieth, when she was to stand over the Sussex side and wait my orders, or take me on board, as you have done."

"You have read the report of our cruise, my lord, during your three weeks' absence?" observed the young lieutenant.

"Yes, I have looked it over, and find you have had too many handsome fights with Cromwell's vessels; but one of these I heard of before I left London, and I assure you it made me proud of my gallant friends on board, and my noble vessel. One would have thought by the way the Londoners talked about your sinking the parliament ship Nestor, that I had been a Moorish buccaneer, and lived by pirating on the world. But Cromwell would have all true loyalists branded as pirates and robbers. There are no honest men in England nowadays but those who have cropped crowns and pray by the league. But to my story. After I had been a week in London we had all our plans laid. Under the disguise of a coal heaver, I had more than once stood within ten feet of Cromwell, as he passed through the palace yard, where I was heaving coal, having managed to get employed there for this purpose. Under the disguise of a baker, I entered the palace, and, as a postman, I placed letters in his very hand. All these opportunities I sought to see him and learn his habits and hours, that we might know what day and hour to fix upon our plan for carrying him off. At length I discovered that every Tuesday and Saturday it was his custom to embark on the Thames to sail up to — palace, there to be present at a council which he had convoked for the purpose of settling upon a new code of justice for the commonwealth, it being his intention to adopt the Justinian code, if possible, over the common law. We resolved that we would have everything ready to lay hands upon him when he should return from one

of these excursions, which we ascertained would be towards twilight.

“I had already obtained a swift barge with two masts and eight oars, and had placed over her a deck that would conceal twelve men. This barge we had placed under a warehouse that belonged to a trusty loyalist. The eight oarsmen were selected by me from a score of the young nobles who are living in London in disguise and poverty, ready to enter upon any enterprise that may bring back the king, by destroying the usurper. The twelve men concealed in the deck were all born lords and barons, half Scotch and half English.”

“Each equally anxious to share the peril and the glory!”

“Yes. At length the afternoon, four days ago, arrived. One by one, by different routes, the lords and gentlemen reached the rendezvous, entered the boat and concealed themselves, with arms in their hands, under the deck. I was the last person there, and went accompanied by the French lieutenant, whose ship was waiting off the mouth of the Thames to receive us. At four o’clock I saw the protector embark in his state barge, rowed by twelve men. He sat in the stern, surrounded by six or seven of his court, for he holds court and carries state like a crowned king. In the bow were eight soldiers of his body guard, armed with harquebuses. At about half an hour before sun-down I saw his barge half a mile off, descending the river. It was returning earlier than we expected, but on consulting with the lords we decided to attack it in open sunshine, and trust to the swiftness of our barge to escape down the river with our prize.”

“It was a very bold enterprise, my lord.”

“One must do a bold thing who would attempt to make Cromwell a prisoner. Standing upon the pier, I watched the descending barge until it had come nearly opposite my lurking place, when, lowering myself into my boat, I said:—

“‘My friends, now is our time! Oars, all give way and launch out into the river.’

“The next moment we shot out from beneath the arch of the old pier, and steered with foaming bow and leaping oars straight for the state galley. The helmsman of it, seeing us about to cross his bows, hailed us and ordered me to back the oars! But not heeding him, I directed my boat’s bows obliquely, so as to strike the barge about half way between her beam and cutwater. The shock, as I ground along her sides, mowing down the whole bank of oars, was so great as to stave in the bows of the galley and break the forward knees of my own boats.

“‘To arms and board!’ I shouted, in a voice of thunder.

“The next moment my deck was alive with armed men, who leaped into the galley and swept her forecastle. Sword in hand, I pressed aft, with Lords McDonald and McFergus, to where Cromwell stood, calling upon his soldiers to rally and fire upon us. His own sword was in his hand, and as I approached, he threw himself into an attitude of a lion at bay.

“‘You are my prisoner, Oliver Cromwell!’ said I, leaping towards him. ‘Give up your sword!’

“‘He who would have my sword must take it!’ he answered, with a firmness that made me respect the man’s bravery.

“I did not wait a second time to be invited, but crossing blades with him was on the eve of getting the mastery, for I once had his sword entangled in the folds of my coat, when his friends, recovering from their panic, fought in his defence like good fellows, and his harquebuses did such good service that we were finally compelled to retreat to our boats, half of us wounded, and abandon the enterprise upon which so much time and talent has been expended. I should have rallied my party and renewed the attack, but for the sight of three barges of troops which I saw pulling to the protector’s aid from the shore; so we got off and made the best of our way down the river, chased by two of the barges. We should inevitably have been taken, if night soon coming on had not befriended us. Under cover of it we mingled

among the numerous boats plying up and down the river, and landing on the south side of the Thames, about four miles below London, we found our way to an inn kept by an old king's man, who gave us cheer and lodging, and bound up the wounds of those who had been hurt. Here I remained until the next night, when, hearing that Prince Charles had certainly been seen in mid-England, making his way in disguise towards the Sussex coast, I resolved to regain my vessel and watch to give him succor. Leaving my poor lords discomfited, but not in despair, and with a second plot fairly hatched out before I left the inn, I took my way across the country on foot, for I had learned from our host that our daring, open attack upon Cromwell had filled all London with amazement, and that the protector had given strict orders to guard all the roads, and look out especially for Red Hand, the pirate earl."

"He knew you then, my lord?"

"He had reason to know me well. Besides, I shouted my war cry, 'A Villiers! A Villiers!' as we charged him on his barge. I had, therefore, to be very cautious in crossing from London to the coast, and traveled chiefly in the night; and when by day I walked, I kept on the hills far away from the roads. At length, last night, I reached the little fishing port of Brighthelmstone, and famished and thirsty, and deeming myself out of reach of all danger in that obscure place, I entered the inn to refresh myself. But as I have told you, a swarm of Cromwell's locusts soon came in, and I had to make my escape the best way I could. To young Guilford Graham I owe my life and present security, and if it is ever in my power to serve him, may I lose my other hand if I forget to do it."

"What an unfortunate result, my lord, of your well-planned scheme to take the usurper," said Edward Percy. "If you had succeeded, Prince Charles, instead of flying from England, would have entered London in triumph."

"Yes; but we will bide our time. The young king will yet sit in his father's throne; of this I feel sure."

"My lord, I feel so. There seems to be a seventh sense in us which scholars do not take note of in their philosophies. It is that sense of being assured that a certain thing yet in the future will come to pass."

"I understand you. It is so."

"When the noble marquis, my father, was led to the scaffold, I had a feeling that he would not be executed then; and after he was remanded to prison and had his second trial, I then felt all the dread certainty that he would die. The result verified my sensations."

"The same feeling which you describe I have experienced. Even now I can say with a certainty as positive as if I were inspired, that Prince Charles will not fall into the hands of his foes, but ere long reach France in safety. Nay, I have a presentiment that it will not be long ere you and I shall behold him in security."

"I earnestly pray, my lord, that your wishes may be fully realized."

"You mean that my eighth sense may not deceive me," responded the earl, laughing. "But my dear Edward, I have a rare romance to tell thee."

"Ah, my lord!"

"Yes. This young Guilford Graham, with his handsome face and fine eyes, has captivated no less a personage than the fair Lady Catharine Vane."

"Impossible, my lord!"

"Nothing more true, Edward. And as to its being impossible, there is nothing more possible, when two young hearts come together and are found to be of kindred mould. How he managed first to win her heart, is to me a mystery; but as he lives at the foot of Castle Vane, I doubt not they have been thrown together in some way very naturally, and what with his reverence for her rank and respectful homage, and her admiration of his person, and perhaps gratitude for rustic civilities, they got to losing their hearts to each other. But be that as it may, they are lovers, and she loves quite as enthusiastically as he does."

"I like the young man--I am grateful to him--I respect his courage; but for him to aspire to"——

"Tut, tut, my dear Edward! The days of chivalry are filled with such real romances of life. An humble lover and high-born maiden is the theme of half the ballads."

"That is true, but"——

"I have, however, something to add that will make you like the young man's honor. It would seem he has lately awakened to the practical view of his romantic attachment, and last night he was on the way to see the lady to release her from all love vows, and tell her that he felt that they never could be united, holding such opposite positions in society. It was on this errand he saw me beset and gave me such good aid. And, oddly enough, on board my ship he finds the Lady Catharine. They had an interview, which I chanced to overhear, which resulted in a refusal on her part to listen, like a noble girl as she is, to any such sacrifice of his happiness on his part, and to her consenting to wait for him until he shall achieve a name and fame that will give him some pretensions to sue for her hand."

"And this compact stands?"

"Yes; and be assured that we shall yet hear of this young man in some honorable and daring exploit. He has it in him, and he has a prize to win that will nerve his arm and carry him to his object through every danger."

"I like him well, my lord. He is certainly deserving of her if she loves him."

"I knew you would like him, and therefore I have told you this. It is my intention to seek him out at an early day, as soon as the prince shall have got safely to France, and then give him employment in charge of the vessel and expedition which is planned for another attempt to get possession, if possible, of the person of Cromwell."

"I was in hopes, my lord, that in this new expedition I should not be overlooked."

"I did promise to give you some opportunity of distinguishing yourself, Edward. But you are too useful to me;

I would have you near me; and besides, I wish from Cherbourg to send you with a message to St. Lo to my fair daughter."

Here the young secretary blushed and looked pleased.

"Besides, wilt thou not, for love's sake, give my young friend Guilford a chance of winning a name that will give him the prince's favor, and thus open a way to his advancement in the world?"

"I gainsay it no further, my good lord," answered Edward, with a cheerful smile.

"Hast thou finished those despatches for Paris?" inquired the earl.

"Yes, my lord."

"Seal and address them. But first let me see the letter to the French king—for it is important that there be no error in it."

The earl took the paper and began reading in a low audible tone, as follows:—

"Your most christian majesty will be pleased to learn that our august Prince Charles, since the disastrous defeat of his forces near Worcester, forty days ago, has hitherto eluded the efforts of Cromwell to take his person captive. I have certain information to convey to your majesty that he is hovering near the English south coast, and will embrace the first safe opportunity for embarking across the channel to find that safety in your dominions which your majesty, through me, has so courteously offered to him. It is to be ardently hoped that the prince will reach the French coast ere many days.'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EXCITING SCENE.

THE earl continued to read on for a few lines further, but in less audible manner, and then immediately returning the letter to the secretary, he said:—

“It is correctly copied and fairly writ. Seal.”

“You have forgotten to sign it, my lord.”

“True.”

The Earl Villiers then took a pen in his left hand and made a capital V, after which he placed a seal that he took from his sword hilt upon some wax that Edward had previously placed for the reception of it. It was a shield, on which was a three-masted ship, and for a crest was a hand severed at the wrist.

“I wear this seal and badge till Cromwell loses his usurped throne, and then I resume my arms. I will yet make him wince the more as men say he does at hearing of Red Hand, his deadly foe! Now I would have thee pen a letter to my fair daughter, at the convent St. Lo. It was four weeks since she wrote me the sweet missive which pleased me so, and I have deigned it no reply. Come, sir, thou art my right hand, and I would have thee write to a lady as I would have done in my younger days. Let the script be smaller than that in which thou hast writ to the French king, and by no means so large as that wherewith thou writest to our English barons. A handwriting for a lady’s eyes, let me teach thee, should be graceful in shape, neat in all its parts, of a pleasing fashion, and without mar or blot. I like well the Italian script for this business. Dost thou know it?”

“Yes, my lord; I have cultivated all styles, of Spain, of France, of Italy, and of Germany.”

“Let us have that of Italy.”

“I am ready.”

“Then say these words with thy own finish; for, by the rood! I am better skilled in ropes and ships than in the art of penmanship. Now to thy task:—

“FAIR DAUGHTER JENNY:—Thy sweet billet came duly into my hand, and was read with pride and satisfaction. It pleases me that thou art so happily content with thy present abode, and that the abbess doth her best to give thee such entertainment as becometh thy goodness and my daughter. Thou wilt pardon this long delay between my answer and thy letter; but this is a busy season since the mishap to the prince’s army, and I am compelled to keep astir, and mostly on the sea, for I am hoping to give the prince the opportunity of getting off from the coast in my ship, which would be the proudest event of thy father’s life to aid his prince in being successful in escaping from his enemies. Thou hast heard ere this how he has been hunted in Scotland; but getting into England, he is now wandering near the coast, and must soon either fall into the hands of his enemies or get safely over to France. If he reach Paris, I shall not fail to go there to give him my homage, in which case I will pass St. Lo and take thee with me; for thy education is by this time well on to its close—and what thou lackest in thy head, thy face’s beauty will make up. Edward Percy telleth me that thou hast grown wonderfully fair. He will be the bearer of this, and I would fain commend him (here there lurked a smiling expression in the corner of the earl’s eye) to thy courtesy and attention, for he hath my confidence and love. Heaven bless thee, fair daughter Jenny, and soon place thee in the arms of thy loving father,

“ARTHUR, EARL OF VILLIERS.”

This letter having been duly penned by the youthful secretary, Red Hand settled himself upon his couch and gave himself up to the proposed sleep which he so much needed, while Edward continued writing at the escritoire.

At length the day broke, and the earl, rising, went to the deck. His keen eye surveyed the horizon. Three or four vessels were in sight, one of which, far to the eastward, was made out to be a brig-of-war; but as she showed no colors, her nature could not be made out—though as she was near the French coast, she was supposed to be a vessel of that nation. Some dozen fishing vessels were also seen running about. Upon all these Red Hand directed the long, heavy telescope of that day, and then, having swept the French coast near which he was sailing, he suddenly gave orders to put about; for up to that time, since Guilford had left her in the yacht during the preceeding night, she had been steering nearly west. The island of Alderney lay about two leagues distant abeam, when they tacked ship.

“Lay her course east-northeast,” said Red Hand. “We will run up the channel and keep cruising between Normandy and Sussex, for we may be so fortunate as to fall in with some of the fugitives crossing who will give us news of the prince. Keep a close watch on all the fishing boats, and run close to each of them, so that if any of the prince’s party be in them, we may take them on board.”

The ship now stretched eastward under all her canvas, for the breeze was light from the south and south by west, and every sail had to be set to get six knots an hour out of her. The men, after they had breakfasted, were called to quarters and trained to the guns, to keep them in constant practice; for they were surrounded by hostile vessels, and might at any hour find themselves engaged in mortal conflict with some of Cromwell’s ships. In this manner, closely examining every craft, the royal cruiser of the channel kept on her course, the sight of her causing many an English trading vessel to up helm and fly for shelter towards the nearest land on the British side.

It was about three o’clock in the afternoon, when the ship commanded by Red Hand came nearly opposite Cape de la Hague, the land lying about five miles from her to the

south, on the starboard beam. The wind had been light and baffling all day, and she had made but little progress since the morning, not having placed more than fifteen miles between her and the place where, at sunrise, she had put about to steer eastward up the channel.

The vessels which had been visible from her deck in the morning had now all disappeared in their several directions, but others were in sight. The brig-of-war, which they had supposed to be a French vessel, had suffered the "Prince Charles" to come near enough for her to make out her character, when, without waiting for a more intimate acquaintance, and trusting to her heels, she hoisted the British flag and ran for Portsmouth. Several fishing vessels, but chiefly Norman, had been brought to in the course of the fifteen miles run, but there was no one on board save the ordinary crews. Nor from two English fishing smacks which Red Hand brought to, could he learn anything of any fugitive having been seen on the coast, or having crossed to France.

About half-past three in the afternoon, as the earl was about to give orders to alter the course of his ship, and run into Cherbourg, the lookout aloft called lustily from his perch:—

"Sail ho!"

"Where away?" demanded the officer of the deck, making use of the same nautical phrsaeology which for more than two hundred years has been customary in the English navy.

"Three points abaft the larboard beam."

The earl glanced over the quarter, and saw a vessel, at some distance yet, but the appearance of which caused him to call quickly for his telescope. When it was handed to him, he rested it upon a ratline of the mizzen rigging and leveled it upon the stranger. There were a dozen other vessels in sight in other directions, but they were all made out to be either traders or coasters or fishermen, save one, which was to the north and east, but which seemed to be coming down hand over hand, bringing a fine topsail breeze along with her.

"What do you make her out, my lord?" asked Edward, who stood near the earl, assisting his one arm in keeping the glass steady.

"A confounded large ship, and with iron teeth enough to eat two such mouthfuls as we are."

"A ship of the largest class, my lord?"

"Yes, and one of Cromwell's bull-dogs. I know her well by her stump topmasts. It is the Leviathan, and is twice our metal. She has a breeze with her, too, and seems to be steering dead for us."

"You may be sure, my lord, she knows who we are."

"Without doubt. We have boarded crafts enough since morning to report us in that quarter."

"My lord," said the quartermaster, who had been for some minutes inspecting the ship in the northern board.

"Well, Claypole, what now?"

"The chap there a-weather is coming down with a bone in his teeth. He has an ugly look about the muzzle."

"If he comes too near, we will spoil his muzzle for him, if that is the case," said the earl, cheerfully; for he was one of those chivalrous natures that take delight in the accumulation of dangers. "The fellow off the quarter has also a breeze, while we lay as quiet here as if we were at our anchors. Have supper for the men early, and then have all hands to quarters," he called out. "We shall hardly get away from these two inquisitive gentlemen who are coming down this way to look at us, without a brush."

At hearing this, the whole quarter deck was in excitement. The officers smiled and exchanged congratulations with each other at the prospect of a battle, while the rumor flying forward among the men, infused a spirit of belligerency into their bosoms that completely changed the whole aspect of things. One would have thought that the happiest intelligence had reached them, instead of the report that two large, armed foes were coming down upon them, probably to attack them, and possibly destroy them and their vessel. But if the faces of the officers and men brightened, the

countenance of their chief, Red Hand, shone with courage and warlike anticipation. Already, in numerous instances, had he met the ships of the usurper and conquered them; and so frequent, bold and successful had been his assaults upon ships, castles, and even towns on the coast, that in proportion as people held his name in awe, his own confidence in his invincibility had increased.

Cape de la Hague, opposite which the ship of the earl lay, scarcely in motion for want of wind, has two horns, and in the bay between them lies the town of Cherbourg. This port was in full sight, not two leagues from the ship; while astern and ahead, but a league to leeward, lay the two capes. To the northward the faint blue line of the coasts of Sussex and the Isle of Wight were visible forty miles off. A little astern, and about seven miles distant, was the larger ship, the Leviathan, coming down on the wind, and steering as if running quietly for Cherbourg. Forward of the beam, in the northern board, also was to be seen the other ship, steering also for Cherbourg, though as this was a French port, there was no probability of their being bound there; but as the Prince Charles lay directly in the track to this port, this vessel was very clearly the object at which they were aiming. There were some half a score of small craft in sight and far distant there were two or three English fishing boats.

The men at length had their supper, and the officers also, so that the after cabins, with the bulkheads removed, were soon turned into open decks with men at the guns. At length, about four o'clock, the Leviathan came so near as to show her ports to the naked eye of the men on the channel cruiser; but the wind had got ahead of her, and Red Hand was able to manage his vessel under motion with a five-knot breeze.

The ship which was coming from the coast of England was now near enough for her guns to be counted; but instead of keeping on for the Prince Charles, she suddenly hauled her wind and stood even six or seven points eastward.

"That is a new manœuvre," exclaimed Red Hand, as he saw it; and catching up his glass, he directed it towards her.

"She is in chase of a fishing smack!" he cried. "I see the smack about two miles ahead of her to the south, and evidently flying from her. They are wetting her sails and using their oars. There must be something more than usual in the wind for a frigate to turn out of her course to chase a fishing-vessel! Crowd every stitch of canvas upon the ship, sir!" he ordered, in tones of animation.

"The smack is making for the French coast as fast as she can make speed," said the quartermaster, with his eye to his glass.

The whole attention of every one on board the cruiser was now directed to the frigate and the fugitive fishing-smack. If there had been any doubt in the minds of any one as to the object which had turned the English vessel from her course, it was now removed by her firing at long shot at the escaping little craft.

"Crowd on all!—every yard of sail!" shouted the earl. "We must cut the frigate off from her chase. Ten to one there is some one of the prince's friends in her, and the glass of the captain of the frigate has detected him."

All on board was now intense enthusiasm. Every nautical art was brought into use to increase the ship's velocity, and enable her to cut off the fishing-smack. The latter had full five miles yet to sail before she could reach the French shore. She was aiming for the little fishing port of Feschamps, beyond the cape. On her starboard quarter, not two and a half miles distant, and pressing all canvas after, and firing at intervals, was the frigate we have spoken of, and from the rapidity with which she gained on her, there was every prospect of her capturing the prize for which she seemed to be straining all her nerve.

The cruiser Prince Charles was about a mile and a half from the fishing smack, and so had a mile advantage of the frigate for cutting her off; yet, as she had to run all this distance to interpose herself between them, it was feared by Red Hand that the smack might be destroyed by the shot of the frigate. He therefore, as soon as he came within range,

opened his larboard battery upon her in the most spirited cannonade. This, as he expected, drew the fire of the frigate upon him; but she did not cease to crowd sail in chase of the boat, nor to send balls after her from one of her bow chasers.

“I will soon put an end to this double game,” said the earl; and bringing his ship into the wind, he opened broadside after broadside upon her so effectually that she had enough to do to take care of herself and return it. In the midst of the battle, which every moment grew hotter, Edward, who had kept his eye upon the smack with the telescope, exclaimed:—

“She has been hit, my lord, and the fishermen are trying to keep her from sinking. But ho, my lord! There is the woman we saw, who has thrown off her gown, and now is working in a man’s dress. It is a man, my lord!”

“Then by the mass, it must be a disguised exile! Let me see.”

The earl took the glass and leveled it at the boat, which had her mainmast shot away, and which was filling fast with water.

“You are right. There are five men now, and no woman! That was a disguise. How know we but the fortunes of England are in that sinking boat? Square away the yards!” he cried, “and let us go to the succor of the boat, so that if there be any one in her of note we can give him aid. Keep your batteries playing lively, my lords,” he called to his officers. “We have knocked the frigate’s quarter railing to pieces, and crippled her foremast; but she is doing her best to come up with the sinking smack. But we will be ahead of her!”

Red Hand now took a position on the bow of his ship, and kept his glass upon the smack. Both vessels are now about half a mile distant from the fishing-boat, and drawing nearer under constant firing, to the point at which both aimed.

“It is the prince!” shouted one of the officers, who had been for some moments looking at the smack, which, having

been cleared from water, the persons in it were once more pulling towards the French coast.

“Who?—where?” demanded Red Hand, to whom he stood near on the bow.

“The man at the smack’s helm, steering. Look well, my lord! He has his hat off, and I can clearly distinguish his features, and his long black hair, and his very figure and air, too.”

The earl himself now took the spy-glass. He looked through it a moment, and then cried, with emotion:—

“It is he! It is the prince! We must save him! Blow this infernal frigate out of the water! Double shot your guns, my men! The prince, our king, is in yonder sinking bark, trying to escape for his life and crown! Fire red hot shot! Make your iron-throated guns roar! See how the frigate gains! Blow her into the air, or they will seize our king from our very grasp!”

The ship reeled, and seemed rent in every seam by the terrible discharge of the whole of her broadside at once into the frigate at scarcely musket-shot range. The iron storm that rushed through the air seemed to be obedient to the fierce mandate of the chief. One of the red-hot shot must have penetrated to the magazine, for scarcely had the roar of the discharge ceased, when it was followed by an explosion more appalling than human ears ever heard. The very surface of the water vibrated and swang from side to side, and the whole heavens seemed rent, while spars, bodies and limbs of men and even cannon, flew through the air, which was filled with shrieks and groans of anguish too horrible for description.

Every man on board the cruiser stood petrified and amazed. Not a word was spoken, not a gun fired, not a foot moved for full a minute, till the last fragment had fallen into the sea, and the ruined ship, with a painful lurch, descended, a huge coffin of dead and dying, beneath the surface of the sea.

“That was the most fearful thing I ever witnessed,” said Red Hand, who was the first to break silence. “But it is

the fate of war. Come, men, do not stand stupefied. It has saved our prince! Behold the royal Charles himself standing at the helm and steering that fishing-smack yonder! In a few minutes we shall have him safe on board. His life is cheaply purchased by the five hundred disloyal lives that have now just been sacrificed to his safety."

We will now return to the smack, on board which we left the prince asleep, while Guilford, at the helm, was guiding his little vessel with skill and speed across the Channel. At one period both the nobles laid down in the bottom of the boat and slept also; so that the smack was for several hours wholly under the eye of Guilford and Robin. Not long after the two noblemen had fallen into repose, a small trading lugger passed them, standing towards the Sussex coast. Its owner was well known to be a smuggler, and Guilford, though he knew him well, as he belonged to Brighthelmstone, had never any intercourse with him. This man steered his lugger a little out of her course, in order to pass close to the smack, which Guilford perceiving tried to prevent; for he did not wish to have the two fugitives who were lying in the bottom of his little vessel, asleep, discovered by him. The lugger, however, kept away for him, and came close under his bows.

"Halloo, Master Guilford!" he hailed; "what luck to-day? Methinks you keep well over to the French coast, when at this tide thou shouldst know thou wilt find the fish plentiest off the Isle of Wight."

"How dost thou know but that I am bound as thou hast been to France, to get a cargo of brandies?" replied Guilford, in no good humor.

"Ah, by my head it would be an honest errand; ay, an honest one, may be," added the man, standing up and stretching his long neck to look over into the smack, for he had brought his lugger almost dead into the wind's eye as he was talking—"honester than smuggling over king's men. I see thou hast a pair! Rare birds, my lad. How many golden louis dost this day's fishing bring thee?"

"Go and mind thy own business, man," responded Robin.

"That will I, and thine too," responded the man, with an evil light in his eyes. "It will be hardly safe for thee to land foot again on Sussex shore if I get there afore ye."

With these words of menace he let his main sheet fly, and before the wind went on his way towards the English shore.

"That man will do as he says, Robin. It will be hardly safe for either you or me to go back at present."

"That it won't, Guilford. But I hope no harm will come upon Anne and thy mother."

"No," answered Guilford; "they will scarcely dare harm them for our acts. Let us hope for the best."

"And fear the worst for Anne."

"It is but a poor courage, Robin, that is ever looking on the dark side. What we wish and believe will almost always come to pass. Let us believe and hope all will be safe with those we love."

"How unlucky we should fall in with that bad man, Guilford!"

"It is all for the best."

"I wish I could think about things as quietly as you do. But the fellow can't do us any harm, for we shall get the prince across before any one can be sent after us."

"Yes, I hope so. If he should fall in with any of the channel watch-ships, which we have so fortunately eluded, he will give information and we shall be pursued. But as we are half way across the channel, I have little fear."

"I don't like the looks of the ship astern," said Robin. "She has ports, I am sure."

"I can't well make her out, but she can hardly notice us; and besides, she can't be in chase of us, for she came from the Portsmouth direction."

Guilford, however, was in the wrong, for once. The frigate was a *guarda costa*, and had been all the day overhauling fishing-boats and examining them, and had seen the smack with other boats some time before. But being spoken by the lugger, the skipper of which pointed out the fishing-vessel, then a league ahead of the ship, as having two

fugitives on board, the frigate rewarded the man for his information and crowded on all sail in chase.

When she had been running on this course some half an hour, the captain of the frigate made out Red Hand's vessel and recognized the ship. Upon making known who she was his officers were by no means anxious to come into collision with the formidable captain, and proposed that the course of the frigate should be changed. To this, however, the commander firmly objected. The disastrous results of the chase the reader has already seen.

When it began, Guilford had called up the prince and made known the exact danger they were in. Prince Charles then manifested the self-possession which always characterized him. Having closely observed the two vessels, both of which were standing towards him, and both of which he supposed to be enemies, he promptly gave directions for the management of their escape. By his suggestions, Guilford, Robin, and the two noblemen rowed with the four oars, and he himself took the helm, and at the same time kept the sails wet by throwing water upon them with a long-handled scoop which the smack carried for this purpose.

"She gains on us, your majesty," said Guilford, whose practised eye could note with more accuracy than theirs the least variation of distance on the water.

"Which of the two, Master Guilford?" asked the prince, now looking at the frigate astern and now at Red Hand's ship, both of which were equally distant from the smack.

"Both of them I see now gain. But the ship to the west is, I believe, a friend, my prince!" suddenly exclaimed Guilford.

"A friend? Then welcome to her! But, by the mace of King Cole, Master Guilford, there is but poor chance of a fugitive like me finding a friend in a Cromwell ship."

"I do believe, your majesty, it is the Earl Red Hand's channel cruiser."

"Earl Villiers!" cried the prince, with animation. "The good angels grant it be! But I fear you are mistaken."

"No, my lord—I mean your majesty"—

"Let my majesty alone, good Master Graham," said the prince.

"Nay, shall I not call thee my prince?"

"If thou wilt. Art sure of the vessel?—for the stout earl is one of the staunchest friends I and England have at this dark day."

"I can't be mistaken, my prince," responded Guilford, with animation. "I recognize the poop and the castle on her bow; for I was on board of her only last night."

"True. The good stars of my house now aid me. Blow, sweet winds! But nay! the same wind that giveth her to us bringeth our foe."

"Your majesty," said Lord Algernon, the gray-bearded noble, "that must be the Earl Villiers, for that is not the English flag which he has just hoisted."

"It is the blue flag with a *red hand* in the centre!" cried the Scottish lord, with a kindling eye. "It is the earl's ship."

"Then there is hope for us yet! But there comes an iron ball after us," added the prince, as a jet of smoke belched from the bow of the frigate which had the English cross flying at her mast head; and a shot came bounding over the waves, dashing the spray upon them as it whizzed past.

Another, and a third shot followed, and then they beheld the ship of the earl come to the wind and open her cannonade. The scene to the eyes of the prince and all with him was so intensely interesting, as they gazed upon the fierce battle between the two ships, that for a moment they forgot to row. But they were reminded of their duty by a shot from the frigate, which struck their boat just forward of the beam, on the bulge of the bow, and cut her down to the water's edge. Instantly they became aware of their peril, and as the boat began to fill, Guilford sprang towards the prince, and placed in his hands a thwart, saying that it would buoy him up if the boat went down.

"Thanks, my brave friend; but what will become of thee?" said the prince, seeing that the two lords held the other planks,

"I will take care of myself. If thou art saved, my prince, my poor life will be offered for thy safety."

"That may not be. Can't we save her?"

"Yes, perhaps we can float, if the noble cavaliers will aid to bale out with their hats."

"That we will do," responded the prince; and throwing off the gown, which until now he had worn, he set the example.

Robin, in the meanwhile, tried to stop the rush of water by throwing his body into the gap—an expedient which was successful, for soon the little vessel began to rise from the flood and float with more buoyancy. But all their efforts were for a moment suspended by the terrific explosion, which forced them from their enemy astern in the awful manner we have already described.

"Merciful heaven assoilize their poor souls!" reverently ejaculated the prince, as he saw the brave ship plunge headlong beneath the sea with its mass of life.

The swell of the sea that followed the immersion of so large a bulk tossed the smack wildly about, and it required all their united aid to keep her from going down. On all sides were seen the black heads of swimmers, who were calling for aid; for at least six score of the crew were thrown by the explosion unhurt into the sea.

"We cannot aid thee, wretches," said the prince, "for we are in a strait equal to thine. All our hopes depend on the present approach of the earl's ship."

This vessel was now within five hundred fathoms of the smack, which could be scarcely kept afloat. Upon her bow stood Red Hand, calling out manfully to the prince:—

"Keep up heart, my royal master! A few seconds more and we will reach you! Down with the boats, but first for me!" he added.

The warlike, castellated ship now got within her length of the smack, when the earl sprang into a boat alongside, and pulled by a dozen strong arms, and the next moment had the prince's hand in his, and drew him from the foundering

fishing vessel into his own barge. Instantly he dropped on his knees before him, and with tears in his eyes kissed his hands.

“O my prince! my escaped, my beloved and royal Charles!” The air at the same time was rent with loud huzzas for Prince Charles, and for a few moments it seemed as if every man in the boats and on the ship were beside themselves. Some shouted, some wept, some huzzaed, some danced over the decks, others embraced, and all was joy and glad uproar.

Escorted by the earl, Prince Charles ascended the side of the ship, and then every officer pressed around him, knelt before him, and embraced him, weeping like children. Charles himself could scarcely see for the emotions that blinded his own eyes with tears. He recognized this one and that one, and called them by name, and kissed on the cheek some of those whom he had once known most intimately.

“Now, your highness,” said Red Hand, whose war-worn cheeks were wet with tears of delight, “let me lead thee into my cabin.”

“Nay, not till I have presented to thee and all my friends the brave young man to whom I owe my escape from England. Where is he?”

The prince then looked around for Guilford, and also for Robin, but was told they were in the smack, which some of the sailors were aiding them in saving from sinking. He then called to him to leave the boat and come on board.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW DANGER—RED HAND'S DEVOTION.

WHEN Guilford, in obedience to the command of the prince, came over the ship's side, and the eyes of the Earl Red Hand fell upon him, the latter exclaimed with surprise and pleasure:—

“What! dost thou owe thy secure flight from the shores of Britain to this young man, your majesty?”

“Yes; and never will I forget my obligations to him. Advance, Master Guilford, and let me present thee as my deliverer to these, my noble friends.”

“By the rood, Sir Guilford!” said the earl, as he warmly grasped his hand, “thou art in luck. Thy star is in the ascendant. Thou art the most fortunate man born! Come, thou shalt tell me how it has been thy fortune to be of such service to England's king.”

“My lord,” said Edward, who had already exchanged a grasp of the hand with Guilford, “the men in the boats wish to know if they shall save the poor devils who are swimming about the ship?”

“What,” exclaimed the prince, “the wretches thrown into the water by the explosion of the frigate?”

“Yes, your highness,” answered Red Hand.

“By all means! Pick them up to a man, and be diligent! They are all my British subjects. You have room for them, my good Villiers?”

“Yes, your majesty, as prisoners,” answered Red Hand, with a slight cloud upon his brow. “But I have little favor for the villains who placed my prince's life in jeopardy.”

“Let that pass! We must be humane, my dear earl. But what ship have we standing down so bravely this way?”

"That is a Parliament war vessel, your majesty," answered Red Hand, who had been so much occupied with the rescue and reception of the prince as to be heedless of the approach of this vessel, until now she was within a league, and booming down upon them under her enormous spread of canvas.

Red Hand, having escorted the prince to his cabin, and ordered refreshments at once to be placed before him and the two noblemen, hastened from his presence, and ascending the highest part of the stern, called Edward to his side.

"Place the telescope in rest here, and let me have a sight at this monster, for I begin to fear that the prince, now that he is on board of us, would be safer anywhere else."

"There is great danger, my lord," answered Edward. "She is certainly coming on us fast since we stopped to take the prince on board."

"Yes, that she is, and she is already training her guns upon us. Make all sail!" he shouted, like the tones of a battle trumpet. "Every man to his post! Boats, aboard! If there are any more men to be picked up, let the ship astern look after them. Cast overboard a dozen spars for the miserable wretches to float on. Sail all! We must save the prince from capture!"

At the sound of his ringing commands all was activity from stem to stern. The boats were hoisted up, and Robin had the regret to see his smack, to which no repairs could be made, drop astern, and at length slowly disappear beneath the tide.

But all that the good ship could do, she could not make her way beyond the reach of the Leviathan's long guns, one of which was now fired upon her at the farthest range. The shot fell astern a quarter of a mile; but the second shot, which soon followed, dropped into the ship's wake.

"The game is up," said the earl. "It will not do for the prince to stay half an hour longer on board, for that ship will blow me out of the water, unless I can work to windward—and then it is doubtful if we can get away from her."

This was spoken to a group of officers whom he had called around him on the deck, while the prince was regaling himself with the wines and acceptable fare he had placed before him.

"We are caught in this bay of Havre de Grace, and must either run ashore or fight."

"It would be madness, my lord, to fight such a ship, twice our size," said his officers.

"I know it. My mind is made up. We must let the prince go. There is the village of Feschamps under our lee, not five miles distant. And there flies a French fisherman straight into the port. Fire a gun forward, and bring the boat to."

The order was no sooner given than obeyed, and a small fly-sail boat with one mast, which was darting over the water, landward, like a swallow on the wing, suddenly lowering its triangular sail waited the approach of the ship. In the meanwhile, the earl entered the cabin where the prince was at his repast with his two friends.

"This is a feast, my dear earl, fit to set before a king," said the prince, laughing. "I have not dined so well in many a day. By the rood! if you keep us so well here in your castle of the sea, we shall be induced to be long your guests."

"Gladly would I have your majesty my guest as long as it may please you to honor my poor vessel with your royal presence. But I regret to say that I have come, your majesty, to warn you that we are not safe even here, though you are surrounded by brave hearts and loyal; these may bleed for you, but they cannot protect you against the foe that menaces your safety."

"What now? Have I to fly again so soon, my dear earl?" said the prince, with a slight shade of discontent on his brow. "I was indulging the hope that for a day or two I should find here repose and quiet."

"So I hoped, your highness. Please cast your eyes out of the stern window, and you will see one of the largest of Cromwell's ships in chase of us. It will be impossible for me to cope with so formidable an antagonist; and I have come to beg your majesty to take refuge on board a French fishing vessel now alongside."

"I am in your hands, my dear earl and my lords," answered the prince, rising. "But to whom am I to entrust myself?"

"Two Frenchmen—an old man and a boy, your highness." "I will take with me my two trusty English friends, Graham and Robin; with them I shall feel secure."

Upon reaching the gangway, the prince asked Guilford if he would still accompany him and see him safely on French ground.

Our young hero very joyfully complied with the prince's wish, and at the same time with the prince the two lords who had come with him got into the fishing-boat. Edward also made one of the party, laden with the packets with which the earl had entrusted him.

"Now farewell, my brave earl, and my lords and gentlemen. I hope, if any of you come to Paris, you will not fail to call on me; and I trust heaven will one day send us all better fortunes."

With this courteous parting speech, the prince raised and waved his chapeau to the officers and also to the men, who crowded the rigging and bulwarks to see him depart. The earl lingered on board the French boat the last of all, and having embraced the prince, he extended his hand to Guilford.

"I see you need no aid from me, my brave young friend. If the prince comes to his own, you will go up with him; that I can prophesy, without being a prophet."

The fishing-boat was now cast off from the side of the ship, and Guilford, by the command of Prince Charles, took the helm from the old Norman fisherman, who had the while regarded with a sort of bewilderment this summary disposition of his little vessel.

"Where will you land, my prince?" asked Guilford, as he took the helm.

"What village is that in the south of that bay?"

"Feschamps, your majesty."

"Good! I will land there. We can reach it in an hour, think you?"

"Yes, your majesty. The wind is fair and free."

"And so are the shot, it would seem, from yonder huge war ship," responded Charles, as a heavy iron missile from the double-decker flew above their heads with an appalling roar.

The earl, who had seen the shot pass his own vessel to windward, at once gallantly steered his ship so as to place her in the line between the fishing-vessel which contained the prince and the enemy; for he saw that they were directing their fire towards it, as if they suspected it contained some important personage.

When Prince Charles saw this manœuvre, whereby the ship completely protected the boat from the double-decker's guns, he said, with emotion:—

“What a true heart that brave Arthur of the Red Hand, as men term him, has in his manly and loyal bosom! He is ready to receive the whole fire of the formidable foe to protect his prince. It is worth the dangers and privations I have undergone for me to learn the devotion of my friends. Everywhere I have found trusty confidants, and in no instance have I been betrayed.”

The fishing-boat now bounded merrily over the water, nearing the land each moment; but the sense of escape and safety was modified on the prince's part by the danger in which he now saw his courageous earl placed. Without attempting to run away from his enemy, but only trying to keep his vessel as a shield to cover the prince's retreat, the earl held his ship in the wind, and received in his hull a shower of iron balls that were hurled upon him from the Leviathan, which kept belching forth fire and smoke.

At length, when the earl saw that the fishing-vessel was beyond the reach of the double-decker's guns, and close under the land; quite beyond all danger of capture, he proceeded to fight his vessel out of the dangerous situation in the best manner he was able. But after firing three broadsides, which had no effect upon the double-decker, which drew nearer every moment, he called his officers about him.

“My lords and loyal gentlemen: you need not be told of the imminent peril we are in. The fate of our noble ship is sealed. It is impossible for us to save her. Our only hope for our own safety is to square away and run for the French coast, and strand her and set her on fire. We have saved the prince! Already he is within hail of the coast, where he will find an asylum and protection. With this let us be content. If we lose our ship, we shall have the proud consciousness of knowing that we sacrificed her for our beloved prince's safety. There remains now but a choice between captivity and the capture of our vessel, or her destruction by our own hands, and our safety on French soil. I shall, therefore, with your consent, give orders to steer straight for the land.”

The officers were all of the earl's mind, and the next moment the gallant ship, already greatly crippled by the Leviathan's heavy targeting, squared her yards and drove straight for the beach, which extended out in front of the town of Cherbourg. The earl would gladly have landed her near Feschamps, but a reef running out in front of that place would have caught the ship half a mile before she could reach the main land.

The Leviathan no sooner found the ship was making for the land, than she came into the wind, and gave her one and then another broadside. But through the storm of iron the brave ship held her way, though her spars were splintered, her rigging cut, her timbers wounded, and her scuppers running blood from her slaughtered crew. Onward she held her course, till at length she had only her foremast and single foresail remaining. Yet with this squared to the wind, she drove forward, staggering and helpless, while the shores of Cherbourg were thronged with citizens, who, by their shouts, encouraged those on board. The Leviathan came to about a mile from the town for want of sufficient depth of water, and lowering a fleet of boats sent them in after the ship, which could scarcely creep along for her wounds. But at length she struck the shore, and a score of boats from the land came off to land the crew. They were soon filled, but Red Hand remained last with a dozen of his men.

"We will give them a parting salute," he said, quietly.

The guns on the larboard battery had been previously shotted, and as the ship in grounding had swung beam on the land, her battery bore directly on the flotilla of boats. The latter were pulling in with a perseverance and boldness that showed their determination to take the ship, though she were in a friendly port; but in those days the privileges of neutrality were not so sacredly regarded by nautical men as they are at the present day.

When the boats of the Parliament ship had got within half a mile, Red Hand gave the signal by touching off the after gun with his own hand. The others were discharged in rapid succession, and the earl, amid the smoke, after setting fire to his ship, left her to her fate.

The effect of the broadside upon the advancing boats was prodigious; so that it was said that Red Hand had slain more men in the last hour of his command on the channel, than in all his fourteen years' cruising. Out of nine boats, but three reached the Leviathan, the others having been destroyed by the final fire of the Royal Charles.

The earl stood upon the shore and witnessed with a sad heart the conflagration of his fine ship, as in the dusk of evening she shot up tongues of lurid flame to the sky, illuminating town and port, harbor and shore, sea and clouds with a brilliant flame, and night closed over a scene of appalling interest and excitement.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRINCE'S STAR IN THE ASCENDANT.

THE earl and his officers were hospitably entertained that night by the citizens of Cherbourg, who, when they learned that Prince Charles had safely landed in France, illuminated their city with joy; for the French of all classes had a great horror of Cromwell, and although they knew little of Prince Charles, the fact that he was the legitimate heir to the British throne was enough to bind him to the sympathy of the loyal, and, in that day, king-loving people.

The next day the earl, whose renown made him no inconsiderable mark of curiosity, quitted Cherbourg for St. Lo, where his daughter, the fair Lady Jane, was placed for security and education. He was accompanied by several of his officers, who from thence were to accompany him to Paris, where they hoped to meet the prince, of whose safe landing at Feschamps the earl had heard through Edward, who had joined him at Cherbourg.

"And what became of my brave friend Guilford?" asked the earl.

"He accompanied the prince, by his request, to Paris. I saw them depart, with the youth, and Robin, mounted on horses furnished by the mayor of Feschamps. Lords Algon and Catesby also accompanied his majesty; and they hoped to reach Paris in eighteen hours."

At St. Lo the earl received his daughter, who joined the cavalcade, and riding more especially under the care of the youthful secretary, she was escorted to the metropolis.

The subsequent events connected with the arrival of the prince in France, and his retiring and establishing a court in Holland of the nobles who had followed him, are such common matters of history that we need not dwell on them in our story, but carry our narrative forward to the period when the sun of his fortunes once more rose above the horizon and lighted him to the throne of his ancestors.

Cromwell, after an unparalleled usurpation of nine years, at length died, contrary to the expectation of his enemies, peacefully upon his bed, and naming his son Richard as his

successor. But this person possessed none of the ambition, or statesmanlike talents, or war-like spirit of his father; and after a brief exercise of the power bequeathed to him, resigned it into the hands of Parliament. England was now without a head; and all hearts were turned to the youthful Prince Charles, who still remained in Holland, where he surrounded himself by a brilliant court. To him a messenger was despatched by the Parliament, offering to reinstate him on the throne of the realm, on certain conditions.

The prince, when the Parliament's courier was announced, was dining at a table at which were seated a score of his nobles, among whom were Lord Algernon, the Scottish lord, Catesby, and last, not least, Arthur of the Red Hand, Earl of Villiers.

When the prince received the packet from the hand of Lord Rudolph, who was the messenger, his brow darkened as he perused it, the expression of his face being all the while closely watched by his friends, who forgot the banquet in their anxiety to learn the news from England. But when he came to the close of it, a smile curled his lip.

"News from London, my lords! You will excuse me while I withdraw to give a response. My lord," he added, addressing the Earl of Villiers, "you will please retire to my cabinet with me."

He also named four other noblemen, and then rising, he took his leave and departed from the banquet-room. Upon reaching his cabinet he closed the door, but first gave orders to have Lord Rudolph Vane, the courier, hospitably entertained with all honor.

"See to it, Guilford," he said, turning to our hero, who had left the table with him at his command, and now followed into the cabinet.

"Your majesty could perhaps hardly appoint a less acceptable host to Lord Rudolph," answered Guilford, with a slight color of embarrassment.

"True, true—I had forgotten. My Lord Granville," added the prince, "I pray you take care of Lord Vane's comfort. We must not treat discourteously our Parliament's messenger."

"I obey your majesty," answered the nobleman, retiring.

"Now, my lords," said the king, "hear our words. The brave and loyal General Monk, who seems to be standing just now in Cromwell's shoes in England, writes me, that now Richard, the son, has resigned his power, he is ready to offer me my father's throne, provided that I will submit

to and put my signature to certain conditions—the very conditions which will make me recreant to my royal father's memory, and be, as it were, an endorser of the justice of his murder. By the soul of the Confessor, I will bind myself to no conditions to regain that which is lawfully mine! My lords, I will nevertheless advise with you."

"May it please your majesty to read to us such passages of General Monk's letter as may enable us to advise your majesty?"

"Listen:—

"Your majesty's restoration is the wish of my breast. That achieved, I am prepared to lay down all power and retire to private life. I am at the head of an army of ten thousand men. I am encamped near London. I have power to wield the Parliament at my will. As yet they do not suspect my intentions, which alone I now reveal to your majesty. If your majesty will consent to the conditions herewith enclosed, I can safely invite your majesty to London, and ensure you a public reception that will surpass any public entry of a monarch since the days of the Conqueror. These conditions I know the Parliament will insist on, and therefore I would get them from your hand in order that when I propose your restoration to this body, I may be able on the spot to shut their mouths to all objections. I despatch my friend Lord Vane as the special bearer of this missive. Do not delay a reply, I entreat your majesty; and I pray do not refuse to comply with conditions, without which I fear the restoration can never be effected. The hearts of the people are with your majesty."

"Now, my lords, here are the conditions."

The prince then read from a paper enclosed in the letter the conditions, which history has made familiar to every reader.

"You perceive, my friends," he said, when he had concluded, "what chains they would shackle us with."

"Nay, your majesty," said the earl, "but rather with what rivets they would strengthen your throne."

"Ha, do you think that way, my lord?"

"I do, your majesty. The people no doubt would receive you without condition; but Parliament must be humored."

"I will truckle to none of them!"

"Nay, your majesty, but something must be yielded on account of the disjointed state of the times and the imperfections of men's loyalty."

"Well, you no doubt counsel wisely. Guilford!"

"Your majesty," answered the young fisherman, who stood near an *escritoire*, a little in the rear of the king. He was dressed in a handsome suit of plum-colored velvet, richly embroidered, a silken vest and laced doublet, and his hair flowed long and waving upon his shapely shoulders. In the interval of two or three years since we last parted with him, a change has been made, not only in his appearance, but in his position. The prince had become personally attached to him from the day he had assisted in effecting his escape from England, and gave him a position near his own person, as his private secretary, a situation of responsibility, which Guilford's talents and address—thanks to his mother's good education—enabled him to fill with credit and honor. At length he became so useful to the prince that the latter could hardly bear his absence; and he always consulted him on all matters before bringing them before his nobles; and after any council, at which Guilford was ever present as secretary, he would talk over with him the debates, and search his opinions upon what had been discussed. By this means our hero not only made himself signally useful to the prince, but as he always had his ear, he held an influence in the eyes of the nobles which gave him a consideration that even rank would not have gained him. If any lord had any suit to prefer, any scheme to forward, Guilford was first made a confidant, with the request that he would bespeak the prince in favor of the applicant. The agreeable person, the engaging and unaffected manners, and the elegant address of the young attendant of the prince made him a universal favorite; and even envy was silenced, when it was remembered that the young secretary was only receiving in this favor of his prince his just reward in having brought him from England to France and saved him from his foes.

Robin, who had no talents for a court, and who had no high aspirations, after remaining a few months in Paris, and hearing that the smuggler who had seen him in the smack had been shot, returned to Brighthelmstone, where he made the heart of the widow glad by the intelligence he brought of Guilford's prosperity and favor with the prince. Soon afterwards he married the pretty Anne, and taking up his abode in the cottage, pursued the same occupation as formerly, and sometimes even going in his fishing trips quite to the coast of France, to convey and receive letters that passed between the prince and his friends in England. There were letters, also, which were not strictly of a political nature, of which

he was the bearer, inasmuch as they were handed him by the Lady Catharine, and addressed to "The Rt. Worshipful Guilford Graham, Secretary to His Majesty Prince Charles."

"Guilford," now said the prince, after having got the mind of his nobles, "sit thee down and write to the gallant General Monk these words:—

"We, Charles Rex, having received your fair letter, give you thanks from our heart for the loyal spirit which hath prompted thee to make the offer of your aid to restore us to our throne. But inasmuch as our subscription to the terms you lay down, which are the same in defence whereof our august father lost his head, we cannot subscribe to them in full, but will arrange these conditions when we come into England, to the satisfaction of our Parliament. We pledge ourselves, however, and here witness our hand, that we will do nothing contrary to the constitution of our realm. If this pledge be satisfactory, we will, on hearing from you to this effect, let nothing delay our return to England.

(Signed in presence of our council of lords.)

CHARLES R."

"Well, my lords, will that suit you?" asked the king, looking round upon each face, and finally resting his dark eyes full upon the face of Earl Villiers of the Red Hand.

"It is as much as becomes your majesty to say," answered the lords.

"Then it shall go! Seal and direct it to General Monk, Guilford. Now, gentlemen, we will return to the banquet-room."

The king's cheerful countenance as he re-entered the hall, gave all hearts hope; and then he said, to cheer them, "It is good news, my friends; the star of our future begins to brighten. Within three weeks, if nothing happens, I hope we shall see merry England once more."

Upon hearing this the whole company of noble exiles started to their feet and made the hall ring with three loud British huzzas.

The banquet was once more about to be resumed, when Lord Rudolph, who was invited by the king to be seated on his right, seeing the Earl Villiers seated next to him, rose and drew back, clapping his left hand upon the hilt of his sword.

"What, so! How is this?" demanded the king.

"I have a feud of blood with the Earl Villiers, and cannot sit by him," answered Lord Rudolph, with a fierce countenance. "Your majesty will excuse me. I will at my hotel await your answer to General Monk."

With these words he quickly strode out of the hall.

CHAPTER XXI.

LORD RUDOLPH'S DASTARDLY ACT.

THE abrupt departure of the fiery noble caused a momentary excitement. The prince looked displeased. The earl smiled haughtily, and young Edward Percy, recently become Earl Percy, stole out after the noble. But he had no sooner reached the vestibule, than he saw Lord Rudolph draw his sword, and with the flat of it strike Guilford, who at the moment was walking across the corridor. Our hero had remained a few moments in the cabinet to seal and address the letter to General Monk, and when he was returning to the hall, he met Lord Rudolph face to face. The latter, the way being narrowed by two columns, on recognizing him cried:—

"Stand aside, dog!"

Guilford's sword was in his hand, but recollecting that he was the brother of Lady Kate, he suppressed his rising resentment, and was passing him, when, as we have said, Lord Rudolph struck him in the face.

"Now, by the rood," said young Edward Percy, as he beheld the blow, "if Guilford stand this, he hath caitiff's blood in him indeed."

Guilford, however, kept his sword point down, and would have gone by him, when Rudolph spat upon him, accompanying the act with an epithet of derision.

The forbearance of our hero was now at an end. He forgot Lady Kate's brother in his own insulter. Throwing

himself upon him, he took his sword from him and broke it upon the pavement, and then, with the eye of a lion, he glanced upon him with contempt, and was going into the hall, when the prince and several nobles rushed forth, having heard the scuffle.

"What means this? What is this drawing swords in our very presence? The person of an ambassador is sacred. Guilford, you are under arrest."

"Your majesty," said the young Earl Percy, "Guilford is not to blame. Lord Rudolph insulted him, and he bore it; he then struck him, and yet he bore it; he then spat upon him, and your secretary took his sword from him, and broke it under his feet, as you see there."

"Then it is Lord Rudolph Vane that hath done this discourtesy," said the prince, reddening with anger. "My lord, I supposed thou hast come hither to us as a messenger of peace, not a maker of brawls."

"I shall not give account of my conduct to one who has neither the right nor the power to exact it," answered Lord Rudolph, haughtily.

"This to the prince's face!" exclaimed Earl Percy, with a flashing eye.

"Nay, Edward. We can forgive this rudeness."

"I would punish it, your majesty, but that he hath but one hand, and it would not be taking him on fair terms," answered Edward.

Lord Rudolph had kept his right arm wrapped in his cloak, a custom which he had followed ever since his recovery from his wounded wrist. He now thundered back, forgetting that Red Hand was present:—

"Thou liest!"

"What! But we will make thee show thyself a liar!" retorted Edward; and suddenly tearing open his cloak, he exposed the handless wrist. There was a shout of surprise from all around; and Lord Rudolph, with his left hand, caught Edward's sword and made a thrust so deadly at the young earl, that he would have run him through the body, but for the interposition of Guilford, who received the point of the blade in his sleeve, at the risk of having his arm pierced.

"This must be stopped, by our head!" cried Prince Charles. "Arrest Lord Rudolph!"

But before he could be obeyed, the savage young noble bounded from the corridor, and leaping into his saddle, spurred away at full speed, followed by the cries of derision and scorn of the assembled nobles.

"Now, by our halidom, my friends," cried the prince, "this unfortunate matter, if reported with distorted tongue in England, will do us a mischief and mar our fortune. He must not be suffered to embark and bear his own tale until I have forwarded my message with the despatches. After my letter reaches our general's hands, Lord Vane can do no mischief, whatsoever he may say. Guilford!"

"Your majesty?"

"Prepare to proceed at once to London."

"I am ready, your majesty."

"Then leave at once. You will find passage easy across the channel with the help of gold. Here is my purse. You have the packet. Go, and heaven speed thee, and bring thee safely back to us with good tidings. My Lord Villiers, please you see that this hot-brained Lord Vane does not take boat till Guilford hath been full twenty-four hours in his advance."

"I will see to it, your majesty," answered the earl, who at once quitted the prince's presence.

In another hour, Guilford was on his way to the seaside, mounted on a fleet steed, the letters of which he was the bearer being tied about him beneath his belt, which also held his well-filled purse of gold. He had to ride seven leagues before reaching the sea. He knew that he had already the start of Lord Rudolph, who, still expecting to take back the prince's answer, had ridden to his hotel. Here he soon learned, by a visit from one of the prince's pages, that another bearer had been selected by the prince. No sooner had he been made acquainted with the fact, than he called for his horse and servants, and was preparing to depart for the coast, when Earl Villiers met him at the door, and said, sternly:—

"My lord, I am commanded by my prince to detain your lordship for twenty-four hours."

"What! am I a prisoner?" demanded Lord Vane fiercely, and turning pale.

"That may be as you construe it. You are not to leave the town until twenty-four hours have passed."

"This is unbearable! and you, of all men, my jailer!"

"I see thou lovest me not. But one cannot choose his friends or enemies in this world, my lord. In such cases we must be patient."

Lord Vane looked at the earl as if he could annihilate him, and then returning to his apartments paced his floor in suppressed rage.

In the meanwhile Guilford spurred forward, and about midnight, by the light of a bright moon, he came in sight of the shining waters of the sea. His road terminated at a small hamlet composed of a few Dutch houses. Not a vessel was to be seen in this harbor save the brigantine in which Lord Rudolph had come over, and which lay off waiting his return. This he was bound to avoid, lest he should be too closely questioned, and after riding along the coast four miles, he saw a lonely hut, and at a little pier near it, a fishing lugger. This he succeeded in hiring of the old man, and soon embarked to cross to England. The wind was light, but fair, and on the fourth day he landed near the mouth of the Thames, and detaining the boat for his return, he hired a horse and rode on to London. He reached the metropolis just as the sun was rising on the morning of the fifth day since leaving the presence of his prince. Putting up at an inn near the Parliament house, he inquired for direction to General Monk.

"What, wilt thou list with him?" asked mine host. "It is said he pays well, though his army hath a beggarly look, and not a good wife can keep an egg or a bit of poultry within a circuit of ten miles about his camp. If thou wouldst join him, thou wilt find his headquarters at Smithfield; but if thou wilt wait an hour thou wilt see him go by here to his house, near the St. James's Palace, where he does business with the Parliament."

"The Parliament are governed pretty much by the general's opinions, are they not?" asked Guilford.

"No, sir cavalier, for they don't know exactly what they are. The old fellow is secret as a mason; but at heart, we believe he is for our Charley over the water, and would be glad to see the restoration."

"And the people at large—do they wish for the prince?"

"Do they? They would darken the very skies with their caps in the air, if he should come into London, to-day. Ah, he is a brave prince, and we all love him. We dare to say so now Cromwell's day is gone; but once it was as much as an honest man's head was worth to speak about him."

While Guilford was talking with the communicative and loyal host, there was heard up the street a shouting of men, and then the clangor of a bugle, and a moment afterwards the cry on all sides:—

"Monk! Monk! Here comes the general!"

Guilford's blood bounded. He was more interested than all others in his coming, and as he rode past, accompanied

by half a dozen field officers and an orderly or two, with a body guard of eighty horses bringing up the rear, he could not but regard with deep interest the man who held the reins of the power of England, not for himself, but for the prince, his master.

Without delay he followed the troop of horses, and at length reached a stately mansion, before which he saw General Monk alight and enter. He was about to pass forward to ascend the steps, when he was put back by a dragoon, who said:—

“Not so fast, sir cavalier. No one enters here without an order—no they don’t.”

Guilford looked hard in the man’s face, for he thought he recognized the voice. But a huge red beard and a fiery moustache defeated at first his scrutiny. But the man himself aided him in the matter, for, after regarding Guilford attentively, he said, in a gratified manner:—

“Is not this Master Guilford Graham?”

“Thou sayest truly,” answered Guilford; “but if thou knowest me, do not speak it out so loudly.”

“And dost thou not know me? I dare say I look too warlike for you to see through me. I am Digby—your old friend Digby.”

“Toby Digby! Verily, you are no longer like yourself. Thou a dragoon?”

“Marry come up! What would you have a man do? I got my head broke so often by Cromwell’s troopers, that I learned the knack o’ head-breaking myself. So, what with fighting, I got my blood up, and when Monk’s sergeants came down to our town ’listing, I was one o’ the first to enlist. It’s a brave life, so long as we don’t have any fighting. But, bless us, they say you are with Prince Charles, over the sea, and that he has made a lord of you!”

“The prince can hardly make lords where he is, honest Digby. I am glad to see thee such a changed man, and doing so well.”

“What art thou doing in England, Master Guilford?”

“I would see General Monk. Can you let me pass for old companion’s sake?”

“Marry, that will I. Go in; and when thou hast done thine errand, wait till I am off guard, and we’ll have a rare gossip o’ by-gones.”

With these words the trooper drew aside and let Guilford pass. Going by several officers who stood in the hall, he came to an orderly, who stood near an inner door, and said

that he desired to have a word of importance with the general.

"Your name?"

"It is of no consequence. Say I have letters to him from France."

Upon hearing this, there was a murmur in the hall of surprise and expectation from the military men and others in waiting, and Guilford was scrutinized with curiosity.

"A messenger from France! a courier from the prince!" went buzzing from lip to lip.

"His excellency desires to see you," said the orderly, reappearing after a moment's absence.

Guilford, all travel-worn as he was, entered the apartment of the commander-in-chief of the army. The general bent his eyes upon him as he came towards him, and then said, courteously, yet with animation:—

"Did I understand my orderly aright? Do you bring letters from France?"

"Yes, your excellency, from the prince."

"From his majesty!" exclaimed the general, with a look of pleasure. "But how is this? Where is Lord Rudolph Vane?"

"He arrived, and placed your letters in the prince's hands; but when the reply which I now bear was ready, he got into an altercation with some of the nobles and others, and gave some offence to the prince, who intrusted the letters to me, who holds the place of his private secretary."

"You are then Sir Guilford Graham?"

"At your excellency's service," answered our hero, as he placed the packet, which he had by this time unbuckled from his girdle, in the general's hands.

"I am glad to see you and to know you. I have heard how the prince owes his escape from England to your undaunted courage and constant devotion."

Thus speaking, the general broke the seal of the letter and read it. Guilford, who had been at Paris knighted by the prince, in token of his gratitude, and who also, at the same time, had received from the French king the order of a chevalier, now marked closely each change in the expression of General Monk's countenance. Having penned the letter himself, he knew every line of it, and could clearly distinguish what the sentences were at which he frowned, and those which seemed to give him pleasure. At length he turned towards the secretary, and, with a mixed expression of dissatisfaction and pleasure, he said:—

"Sir Guilford, do you know the contents of this letter?"

"I do, your excellency."

"I am sorry the prince refuses to sign the conditions, but it cannot be helped. We must do as well as we can with what he says. It may satisfy the Parliament. But how left you the prince?"

"In good health, your excellency."

"And the Earl Villiers—was he well? and the Barons Algernon and Catesby, and also my Lord of Percy?"

"I left them all well, your excellency."

"I hope soon to see them with their royal master all in England. What day did you leave the prince?"

"This is the fifth, your excellency."

"You have made despatch. The Parliament is now in session. I am going thither. You must accompany me, Sir Guilford. I will make known to them that the prince has sent a messenger to them."

"Yes, your excellency. There are duplicates of the letter you have, one addressed to yourself, and the other inscribed, as you perceive, to the Parliament."

Here Guilford showed him a letter which the prince had given him in case it should be called for.

"This is very good. The seal remains unbroken, and it is addressed to the Parliament. I will take you with me at once to the hall. Your presence will do a great deal, as a courier from the king."

The general then left the apartment, and, passing through the saloon where his staff were, called, "To horse!"

All was now excitement and motion. Every gentleman hastened to his saddle. Digby, who resolved not to lose the opportunity of having a gossip of bygone times with his former acquaintance, had kept a sharp eye on the door for some time. But when he saw him reappear walking side by side with General Monk, and heard the general order a horse to be brought to Guilford, and saw the deference and honor which the commander of the army paid to him, his amazement was so great as nearly to stupefy him.

"What aileth thee, man?" called one of his comrades to him. "Are thine eyes going to quit thy head? Fall in with thy horse into the rank. Dost not hear that we are ordered to fall in and trot?"

Digby mechanically obeyed the order. But he shook his head, and, with a downcast look, he said to himself:—

"My gossip is all up. Master Guilford has become a great man. I heard he was a lord, and it must be true."

At the door of the House of Commons, General Monk alighted and entered the hall, leaving Guilford in the vestibule. When Monk found that the Commons had still come to no decision, and seeing that all hearts were for the prince, though not a lip dare utter his name, he stood up and said:—

“Gentlemen, the time is come when England should have rest. No plan of government has been proposed. I will propose none; but I have just placed in the hands of your president of the council a slip of paper, on which I have hastily written a line with a pencil. You will please read it aloud, my Lord Annesley.”

Every eye was fixed upon the president. All hearts throbbed with anxious expectation. Some thought it would give them the information that the prince was privately in London; others that General Monk himself had taken this method to make known his own intentions of assuming the protectorate. The president, however, soon removed all speculations by reading as follows:—

“General Monk desires to make known to the house of Commons that a messenger from the prince arrived in London this morning”——

Here there was such a sensation and demonstrations of satisfaction so loud that the president could not proceed. At length, order and silence being in some degree restored, he resumed:—

“The messenger is the private secretary of his majesty, Sir Guilford Graham, and is now at the door of the house waiting to deliver a letter of which he is bearer to the Commons.”

Upon hearing this, there arose one universal shout from the members of the House; and cries of “Admit him! Admit him!” were heard vociferously.

As Guilford entered, bareheaded, and walked up the aisle, escorted by General Monk, nothing could exceed the enthusiasm with which he was received. The members, says history, “for a moment forgot the dignity of their situation, and indulged for several minutes in loud acclamations of applause.”

Modestly, yet firmly, the youthful baronet, Sir Guilford, walked up to the head of the hall and placed the letter in the hands of the president. The hall was silent as the tomb while the letter was read. When it was concluded, or rather while he was reading the final sentence, all at once the house burst into one universal assent of the king’s proposals, and immediately a vote was taken that the letter should be published. A vote of thanks was also passed to Sir Guilford; and as all had heard of him as having been the person who had

taken the prince to France, there was a twofold motive for their crowding around him and overwhelming him with congratulations. He was taken home to dine with General Monk and a large party of lords and gentlemen, and bore all his honors with a grace and modesty that won all hearts. The same evening, he left London with the answer of the Commons and an invitation to the king to return and ascend the throne. The bearer of such joyful news, he could not obey the impulses of his love to turn aside to visit Castle Vane, and he hastened, as fast as spur and wind could carry him, to rejoin his prince, and lay at his feet the triumphant results of his mission. Upon landing from the fishing-lugger, which had taken him safely back to Holland, our hero delayed only to reward the owner of the boat, and then, mounting his horse, which had been kept there waiting for him, he took the road to the town where the prince held his little court. He had not ridden, however, but a league and a half, when a woman called to him from a wretched house on the roadside, and asked him to come in for one moment and see a man who was dying.

Prompt to obey the impulses of humanity, Guilford dismounted at the low door, and crossed the threshold. By the light which came in from a small square window above a miserable truckle-bed, he saw, to his amazement, Lord Rudolph lying, and in the last extremity of life. Upon seeing him thus prostrate, all resentment fled from Sir Guilford's bosom, and he spoke to him in the kindest manner, and asked what he could do for his repose of mind; for he remembered Lady Kate, and that this was her brother. No sooner did Lord Vane hear Guilford's voice, than he opened his eyes and fixed them glaringly upon him.

"What art thou come for? Thou, of all men!" he said, "Bring the Red Hand, and then I shall be well attended."

"My lord, I am thy friend. Can I serve thee?"

"Who art thou?"

"Guilford Graham."

"Yes. A knave! Thou wouldst rob me of my sister! Thou hast bewitched her—thou and thy mother!—given her love-potions! Avaunt! I despise thee! I spue at thee!"

"I am sorry, my lord, to see you lying here in this condition. How has it occurred?"

But the nobleman had exhausted his strength in his last efforts to speak, and lay panting and glaring fiercely at him.

"His servant robbed and shot him near by," said the woman. "We found him bleeding and insensible nine days

ago, and brought him in, where he has grown worse ever since, and raves and curses fearfully."

"Yes; I have cursed thee and Lord Villiers. See! One has robbed me of my hand," and here he held up the inflamed stump of his wrist, and shook it at Guilford, "and the other has robbed me of my sister!"

"My lord, you should cease to think of worldly matters," said Guilford kindly. "Turn your thoughts heavenward, for methinks that thou hast not many minutes to live."

"And these I will spend in cursing thee, and telling thee how I hate thee. Thou a baronet! Thou a prince's confidant! Thou take my place as courier to the Parliament! I spit at thee! Go and tell Red Hand the robber that I spent my last breath in cursing him and thee!"

"My lord, I implore—I entreat, for thy sister's sake, make thy peace with heaven"—

But Guilford paused and said no more. The fallen jaw—the set eyes—the motionless face—all told him that death had claimed his soul.

Upon reaching the palace of the prince, his majesty was pacing up and down the corridor with Earl Villiers, while several noblemen were lounging near in groups. No sooner was the rapid rider recognized to be Sir Guilford Graham, than his name was repeated by twenty voices; and Charles, stopping in his walk, waited to receive him, with his hand extended in welcome. Passing by the eager nobles, Sir Guilford reached the king, and, dropping on one knee, kissed his hand, and then placed in it the letter of the Commons. The king tore the seal, and read half through it to himself, when, seeing that it was all good news, he read it aloud:—

"Therefore we, the Commons of England, do accede to your majesty's propositions with joy, and do invite your majesty to return to England and ascend the throne of your fathers, and we will ever be your majesty's loyal and faithful subjects, and ever pray for the health and life of your majesty as in duty bound."

"First let me embrace thee, my trusty friend and welcome bearer of such good tidings!" cried the king, with tears in his eyes, clasping Guilford to his heart before all his nobles, while they rent the air with acclamations of joy such as the Dutch palace and the honest Dutch people had never witnessed before. The earl also embraced Guilford, and so did Edward, Earl of Percy. That day and night were passed in pleasurable enjoyment, and in the reception by the king.

In a few days afterwards, King Charles and full two hundred lords and gentlemen left the town for the coast in an imposing cavalcade. Here a ship-of-war—the very Leviathan which had been so near capturing him, but which had now changed masters—was waiting to receive him, by order of the Commons, and bear him to the shores of England.

CHAPTER XXII.

LORD VANE AND LADY CATHARINE AT COURT.

THE inhabitants of the little fishing port of Brighthelmstone were one morning thrown into no little excitement by the arrival of a brigantine in the port, the sails of which were shrouded in black, and the flag wreathed with crape, while festoons of it hung from mast to mast. At length a boat landed, and from the sailors, after the officer had proceeded to Castle Vane, the good folks learned that it contained the body of Lord Rudolph who had been murdered in Holland, and for whose body the marquis, his father, had sent.

A procession of boats escorted it to the landing below the castle, where it was received by the father of the young nobleman. The same evening, it was placed in the family vault, and the ensuing morning the brigantine, firing a requiem of minute-guns, slowly departed seaward.

“This attention to the obsequies of my misguided son, I learn by a note from Earl Villiers,” said the marquis to his daughter as they sat together in his cabinet talking of the dead, “we owe to a Sir Guilford Graham, the king’s private secretary. Hast thou ever heard of this knight, my child, and knowest thou why he took this pains to honor my son?”

Lady Catharine’s heart beat rapidly. She colored, and was about to make some confused reply, when he further said:—

“The Earl Villiers further says in his note that the king will hold a grand levee at the palace on the first Wednesday of next month, and that he desires that I should be present, and accompanied by thee, but”——

“But what, dear father?”

“It becomes us to mourn for Lord Rudolph.”

"Yet we need not enter into the festivities. All friends of the king are hastening to London to do him homage."

"True; and as Lord Rudolph was of the opposite side, I shall be looked to to make a more particular expression of attachment to the crown."

"You will then go, dear father?"

"Yes. You may have everything ready."

This permission filled the bosom of Lady Catharine with joy. She was young, beautiful and gay, and desired to see something of the world from which she had been so long shut out.

"Besides," said she, "I shall see Guilford in London, for I learn he is in high favor with the king, and honored and loved by all men."

With a happy heart the charming countess left her father to make preparations for the coming visit to court.

At length the eve of the great day of the king's banquet and levee arrived. London was crowded with the nobility and their families. One spirit of satisfaction and delight pervaded all men's minds.

The Marquis of Vane and his daughter were at the mansion of the Earl of Villiers as his guests. The daughter of the earl, the fair Lady Jane, shone with surpassing radiance above all other maidens save Lady Kate. The two became very intimate, for they had known each other in earlier years.

"And you are to marry to-morrow the handsome Earl of Percy, fair Jenny?" said Lady Catharine to her friend, as she was arranging a circlet of bridal diamonds.

"Yes; and I am told by my father that you are to marry the brave Lord Astley."

"Lord Astley! I never saw him!" answered Lady Kate, with great positiveness.

"Well, that is odd. Both my dear Edward and my father told me to-day that you were to marry the noble Guilford, Lord Astley."

"Guilford do you say his name is?"

"Yes; but why do you blush so?"

"Did I?"

"Indeed, your face tells the truth. So we are to have a Lady Astley to-morrow at the palace as well as Lady Percy?"

"I assure you, dear Jenny, it is a mistake. I do not know Lord Astley. I only was surprised at the coincidence of a name."

At this moment Red Hand, the tall and stately earl, came in, and smiling upon his daughter, he asked Lady Kate if she had heard any news from court that day in particular.

"No, my lord. I have not been out to-day."

"Father," exclaimed Lady Jane, "did you not tell me Lady Kate would probably marry Lord Astley to-morrow?"

"Yes, I think I did," replied the earl, smiling.

"It is a mistake, my lord. I do not know his lordship."

"But are you not to be married to-morrow, fair lady?" asked Lord Villiers, slyly.

"How did you hear this, my lord?" she answered, in beautiful confusion.

"From Edward, who is an intimate friend of Guilford Graham, who told him, as a great secret, that it was all arranged, and that you were to be married to him before the king's presence, in Westminster, to-morrow."

"My lord, it is true; but not to this Lord Astley."

"But suppose— No matter. I will not tell what I see he has kept a secret. I wish you joy. You will have a husband so worthy in Guilford Graham, fair Kate, that no nobility can emulate him."

"Thanks, my good lord."

"Ah, I know all your romantic loves. Guilford, to whom I owed my life once, told me the whole story; and a creditable one it was to you. But hither comes Earl Percy. So I will leave him to entertain you, for I have to attend on the king."

"My lord," said the earl as he entered, "is it true that the king has appointed you commander-in-chief and full admiral of the fleet?"

"Yes, Edward; he conferred the post upon me yesterday, and next week I go on board my flag-ship at Portsmouth; for we are going to have war soon with Spain."

"What is the name of your flag-ship?" asked Edward.

"The Leviathan, our old friend."

"How fortunes change in this life!" ejaculated the earl.

"Do you know who I have chosen as my second in command?" asked Lord Villiers.

"No; it is likely the Duke of Kent."

"No; Lord Astley."

"What, Guilford? I am overjoyed. Do you hear, Lady Kate? How does it please you?"

"Is it possible, my lord, that I have misunderstood you all this time, and that Guilford Graham and Lord Astley, of whom I hear so much, are one and the same person?"

"Yes, that is it," answered the earl, with a merry laugh. "And it is odd that you are the last to know that Sir Guilford was this morning ennobled with the title of Earl of Astley, and the rank of post-captain in the navy."

The joy and surprise of Lady Kate were expressed rather by her tears than by her smiles, though both struggled for the mastery on her happy face. She felt that her constancy, as well as the self-sacrificing spirit of Guilford, had been amply rewarded, and that, after all, she was to give her hand to a man her equal in rank every way, and one of the most popular men in the kingdom, who had the confidence of the king, the friendship of the nobility, and the respect of the people. Well might she say, as she cast herself into the arms of Lady Jane:—

"This is the happiest day of my life!"

The next day the palace was the centre of the thoughts of thousands and tens of thousands, of every rank and degree. The nobility flocked thither to banquet with the king and behold him in state elevated upon his throne. The masses came to see him pass in procession from the banquet-hall to Westminster, where the bridals were to take place.

At five o'clock the ceremony of the marriages commenced. First the handsome Earl of Percy led to the altar the lovely Lady Jane, daughter of Red Hand, Earl of Villiers. She was given away by her father, and the beauty of the happy pair made a lively impression of pleasure upon the vast assembly.

Next advanced Guilford, Earl of Astley, leading by the hand the charming and constant Lady Catharine. At the sight of this pair a murmur of approbation ran through the cathedral. The history of Guilford was well known, and a thousand eyes sought to rest on the face of one who had risen from an humble fisher's boy to be the confidant of his king and the peer of lords of the realm. In height, in comeliness of air, in commanding air, there was no high-born baron of them all who were present who surpassed him.

The king himself gave away the bride, and at the conclusion of the benediction by the venerable Archbishop of Canterbury, the sacredness of the place did not wholly suppress very animated applauses and hearty wishes for their future happiness.

We have now come to the close of our story. If our readers should ever visit the little fishing town of Bright-helmstone, in Sussex, the ruins of the Castle Vane may recall to their recollection this story. If they inquire for the

descendants of Lord Vane, they will be pointed to Astley Castle, a mile in the interior, where lives the present Earl of Astley, the lineal descendant of Guilford Graham, the first earl of that name. Over the gateway it will be seen that the arms are a tower with two oars crossed, and the motto, "Loyal en Tout."

At the foot of the ruins of Castle Vane is an ancient stone cottage, which they will tell you, if you inquire, is "King Charles's Cottage." If you go to the door and ask why it is so called, a stout fisherman in the yard mending his nets will answer that, many years ago, in "the old Parliament times," Prince Charles was hid there one night before he got away across the channel. If you ask the man his name, he will tell you that it is Robin Rengivell, and that he is a descendant, in the eighth generation, from Robin and Anne Rengivell, who dwelt there in the Parliament days, and Robin was one who aided the king's escape.

The descendants of Red Hand are still among the noblest of England's aristocracy; and it is an inexplicable characteristic of the race, that every eldest son of the progressive generation is born with a distinct impress of a miniature red hand upon the inside of the left palm.

[The End.]

GOLD MEDAL, PARIS, 1878.

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